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GORDON D. PENGILLY

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

"SONGS FOR BELIEVERS"

by



GORDON D. PENGILLY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

PLAYWRITING

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1978

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have
read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

"SONGS FOR BELIEVERS"

submitted by Gordon D. Pengilly in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine
Arts.

Mr. B. J. J. J.
Supervisor
H. J. J. J.
J. J. J. J.

DATED March 30 1978.

SONGS FOR BELIEVERS

by

Gordon D. Pengilly

#111 5314 Riverbend Rd.
Edmonton, Alberta

November 1977

SONGS FOR BELIEVERS

Characters:

RUBIN COOK, a teacher, 45.
MARY, his wife, 40.
WENDY and LEE, their children,
18 and 19 respectively.
FINGLE COOK, the bishop of
the ward, RUBIN's older
brother. RICHARD WEBER,
the returned missionary, 20.
BETH, a young woman.

Setting:

A small Mormon village near
a city in Southern Alberta.
The back yard of the COOK
home. A door into the house.
A walkway to the street.
A wooden fence with a gate
leading into the back lane.
A path toward the garden.

Time:

The present.

Act One.

Scene one. Mid-morning at the COOK home.

Scene two. Two hours later.

Act Two.

Scene one. Mid-afternoon the same day.

Scene two. Much after mid-night.

Mormons sprang into being on American soil before the astonished gaze of the American public, fought bloodily with their neighbors and the federal government, and trekked dramatically westward across the continent in their search for Zion. An original theology and a new-found church gave the Mormons unity and strength and marked them as a people apart.

Richard M. Dorson
(American folklorist)

ACT ONE
Scene One

2

(MARY and WENDY are in the back yard of the COOK home, cutting the greens off the carrots and washing them in a bucket. There is a wicker mending basket beside MARY as well)

(Sings)

MARY

The other night I had a dream,
I dreamt that I could fly,
I flapped my wings like an eagle
And flew into the sky.
And there I met St. Peter,
I met him at the gate.
He asked me in to dine with him
And this is what we ate:

Oh — carrot greens,
Good old carrot greens,
Corn bread and butter-
milk and good old carrot
greens.

(Pause)

Did you know my mother had a rhyme for every chore? Oh we sang songs and told poems much more often when we were children. Made the work go faster. The work was never done but we developed awfully nice singing voices. People used to gather for miles just to hear us serenade the spuds.

WENDY

Oh sure.

MARY

We were lovely singers our family. People said we were. My sister Evelyn took some training at University. We all had high hopes for her too. But she got engaged in the first semester and was married at Christmas.

WENDY

How old was she?

MARY

About your age. Well she did all her singing in church after that.

WENDY

I guess she really wanted to get married then didn't she? I mean we might have had an entertainer in the family.

MARY

Well people said I had a mighty fine voice myself. When Evelyn was at University I sang all the solo parts in the choir. I tell you if I'd had her chance... Well! Who knows?

WENDY

I guess you'll never know now.

MARY

I wouldn't say that. I just might have a few plans of my own when my children finally leave me. Don't you think for a minute I'm going to be a lonely old has-been for the rest of my life.

WENDY

What plans are those?

MARY

Well... I've been thinking I might enroll in night school in the city and take a music course or two. Just to get my singing voice back with me again.

WENDY

Really?

MARY

Well you know I can't nearly make the notes I used to when I was younger. I think that's a shame too because people always said I had an awfully pretty voice... There! What do you think of that?

WENDY

That's... nice.

MARY

Well thank you dear. I'm glad you're so excited for me.

WENDY

No, it'll be great for you. I mean it.

MARY

I know what you're thinking. You think I'm too old for that sort of thing, don't you?

WENDY

I didn't say that!

MARY

You think I already missed the boat. Well there's one leaving every day, that's what my dad always said.

(Pause)

Aren't you happy for me?

WENDY

Oh I am. I really am.

MARY

Good... Promise me you'll always sing to your children. There's something about music that brings along love.

WENDY

I'll sing to them.

(Pause)

Mum? How many children should Richard and I have?

MARY

"Children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is His reward. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them."

WENDY

Does it hurt as much as they say?

MARY

That much and more. But pain in a wonderful way.

WENDY

Do you ever wish you'd been able to have more children?

MARY

Oh I suppose once in a while I think about the good, big family I grew up in, and then I wonder a little, but not for long. I just think of you and your brother and all my other blessings.

WENDY

I gave you a horrible time, didn't I?

MARY

We're both lucky to be alive. But never mind that now — we're hearty as two hogs. An old fat one and a young cute one...C'mon sing with me!

Oh — carrot greens,
Good old carrot greens,
Corn bread and...

(Pause)

MARY

What's the matter, Wendy? You look so forlorn.

WENDY

I'm not forlorn.

MARY

Well I hope not. This is a special day for us.

WENDY

It's not that special. Richard's been over for dinner before.

MARY

Not as my future son-in-law he hasn't! After dinner I've got a big surprise for the two of you. I've been on pins and needles waiting if you want to know the truth. What time is Richard coming over?

WENDY

I don't know for sure. He said he would phone me. And he hasn't yet.

MARY

Now isn't that just like a man to tease a woman to tears. If I were you I'd just hide away my smiles for a while. That should bring him to the door with flowers.

(Pause)

(WENDY is not amused)

MARY (continued)

It usually takes a little while for the fellows to come completely off their missions. Two years is a long time. Be patient with him. He's just a little out of practice caring for a girl.

WENDY

Do you really like him, mum?

MARY

Do I like him! I've been fond of Richard for as long as I can remember.

WENDY

(Brightening up)

So have I.

MARY

Of course you have! Everyone thinks you're the perfect couple and always have.

WENDY

When he was in France on his mission I thought I'd die waiting for him to come home. Didn't I?

MARY

You certainly did!

(Pause)

He's a wonderful young man, Wendy. I was just saying to your father at breakfast what a fine, fine mark Richard's mission has put on him. So bright and assured. Ready to take on the world!

(Pause)

I wish some of it would rub off on your brother.

WENDY

Oh sure. Lee hasn't spoken to Richard since his homecoming party. I don't know what's happened between them.

MARY

And they were such good friends all through school. The two of them always under my feet.

WENDY

I can't stand the thought of them hating each other for the rest of their lives.

MARY

They won't. They've been too close for that.

WENDY

When they were boys they made a blood-pact to go off to sea and be sailors together.

MARY

Really? I never knew that.

WENDY

Oh yah, Richard told me. He still has the scar in his palm.

MARY

That boy of mine... I wonder what he really wants for himself. Has he ever tried to tell you, Wendy?

WENDY

I don't think he knows.

MARY

I wish he'd find a nice pretty Mormon girl to give him confidence and stop his foolish waste of time. He's never saved a penny, not a penny, and every time he comes home with the beer parlor hanging from his clothes your dad burns alive. It's been a disturbing summer for him with Lee carrying on the way he's done. I tell you — one of these days... Well I just don't want to be around when it happens.

WENDY

What bothers me most are the things he says about Richard.

MARY

Well no wonder you look so forlorn. He gets right under your skin, doesn't he? Just don't listen to him. He doesn't mean half the things he says.

(Pause)

WENDY

Mum? He's changed somehow hasn't he? ... I mean remember when he used to build all those things with his hands. He used to disappear into the junk lane and come out hours later with something that floated or flew or made a loud noise. Remember? He was a lot easier to be around back then. When did he stop doing things like that?

(RUBIN comes out of the house.
He is carrying a fishing rod
and a fishing tackle box).

(Sings)

RUBIN

'Tis the song and the prayer of the people:
Ditches, ditches, break that way no more.
Many times we have mended places in which you broke before..
O, ditches break that way no more.

MARY

My you're in fine voice this morning, father.

RUBIN

That's me alright — up with the birds.

WENDY

Well just don't scare them all away singing sad songs.

RUBIN

I'll sing what I feel like.

MARY

It's not a sad song, Wendy. Not really. It depends on your mood and interpretation. Isn't that right, father?

RUBIN

If you say so, mother. I wasn't really caring that much.

WENDY

You sound like you have a turnip in your throat all the same.

RUBIN

I think you got turnips in your ears. If you don't like my songs go sing your own ... I thought you were going to help your bishop in the store today.

WENDY

I'm going. It's still early. Don't worry the fish won't all disappear.

RUBIN

Smarty-pants ... Is Lee out of bed yet?

MARY

I don't think so. He came in late last night.

RUBIN

Again.

MARY

Are you taking him fishing with you? I'll wake him up if you say so.

RUBIN

He knows I'm going out this morning. I'm not going to twist his arm.

MARY

Is the Bishop still going with you?

RUBIN

Said he was.

WENDY

Then you couldn't get Lee to go if you dragged him with a horse. You know how they get along.

RUBIN

You don't have to remind me, Wendy.

(LEE appears in the doorway,⁸
unseen. He is a nervous,
wiry sort. His hair is dis-
hevelled and his eyes are
full of the night before.)

MARY

Is something the matter, father?

RUBIN

No nothing's the matter. Why do you ask?

MARY

You haven't been yourself lately.

RUBIN

I haven't had any sleep lately! Our son has come home late every
night this week.

MARY

Where does he go? What does he do all night? That's what I wonder
and wonder.

RUBIN

I don't know and I don't care to know, but I have strong feeling it's
all going to change.

MARY

Change, father? What do you mean you have a feeling?

RUBIN

Let's just say I've been doing some serious thinking.

LEE

(Making his presence known)

Well, well! Isn't it nice to be thought of ... seriously.

WENDY

Alright, eavesdropper, how long have you been standing there?

LEE

Long enough to hear the usual sweet stories about me.

MARY

(Not unkindly)

You missed family prayer this morning Lee. I went in to wake you but
you were breathing like a blizzard and didn't hear me.

LEE

Straight to the whipping post.

WENDY

Sour puss.

LEE

Sweet as honey.

(He pinches her rear)

WENDY

Ow!

RUBIN

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Are you going fishing with us, Lee?

LEE

Fishing?

RUBIN

Don't tell me you forgot. I told you that your Uncle Fingle and I were going out this morning.

MARY

Don't forget dinner.

RUBIN

We won't, mother... So what do you say? Wouldn't mind you along if you thought you could spare the odd morning.

LEE

You don't usually ask me along.

RUBIN

You never show any interest.

LEE

I can't today. I've made other plans.

RUBIN

You mean you're turning me down?

LEE

I'm sorry, dad. You don't have to make it sound so critical. I'll go next time.

RUBIN

I want you to go today.

LEE

I told you, I've made other plans. I'm meeting someone.

RUBIN

Who? Never mind, I don't want to know.

LEE

It's no surprise. You never do.

RUBIN

What's that supposed to mean?

MARY

Lordy-lord. Go argue your heads off somewhere else. Today is a special day for Wendy and I won't see it soured in old quarrels.

WENDY

Don't say that, mum. The day hasn't changed.

MARY

Not if I can help it. Go across to the park and bang your heads against a tree. It makes as much sense.

RUBIN

Nobody's arguing, mother.

MARY

Well don't get started. The whole neighborhood will hear.

RUBIN

(To LEE who ignores him)

I'm sorry I snapped ... Lee? Did you hear me?

MARY

(Somehow affectionately)

You and your bad tempers. Both of you!

RUBIN

Well if I feel mine rising today I'll put out the bear-warning ten minutes in advance. That's a promise.

MARY

Just see that you do. It's such a beautiful day for a little celebration under the trees. Look at that sun!

WENDY

Same as yesterday.

MARY

No, brighter! Brighter by far! And don't you be getting off in a blue mood for Richard. That won't do at all.

WENDY

(Looking at the sun)

Who says I'm blue? I just don't feel anything special about it. Same old sun all summer long. Or maybe it is me.

(She slaps her cheeks as if to awaken them to the rays of sun.)

LEE

Don't panic, sister. If you don't like the sun I'll take care of that. I bet I could shoot it right out of the sky with grampa's old shotgun. Whaddya say dad, will you gimme a crack at it?

RUBIN

Keep your hands off that gun. Don't expect any favors if you can't give any in return.

MARY

Oh now look what I started. I didn't mean to tease up a storm. Maybe it's silly but I feel like a girl again and I'm ready for a puddle of fun. That's what my mom used to say — a puddle of fun for everyone!

(Sings)

The other night I had a dream,
I dreamt that I could fly.
I flapped my wings like an eagle
And flew into the sky.

(To LEE who has drifted over to the fence and is looking down the lane gloomily)

MARY (continued)

...And don't you be getting any ideas about disappearing for dinner, young man. I want you here looking after your friend while we're in the kitchen.

LEE

He's big enough to look after himself.

MARY

Well at least show some interest. You look bored as a fence post.

LEE

I'm tired this morning, mum, and I just want to be on my own. Okay?

RUBIN

If you'd come home at a decent hour once in a while you just might have something left over for your family. Or is that asking too much?

MARY

Now father

RUBIN

Now what?

MARY

You promised.

RUBIN

Well if he thinks he can come dragging his body into this house any old way he feels like it he's got another think coming. I've had a sleepless summer and he knows it.

LEE

Don't blame me for your lousy summer.

RUBIN

Oh and I suppose you've bent over backwards trying to make it pleasant for me.

LEE

I couldn't please you if I tried.

MARY

Lee! Don't you talk to your father that way.

LEE

He started it. Everything he says makes me feel guilty and delinquent.

RUBIN

That's ridiculous!

LEE

Is it?

MARY

It's all in the way you take it. If you ever listened with the proper attitude going you might learn something from him. When he was nineteen he had his feet square on the ground. Look at you. You got your socks down around your heels, somewhere. He wanted to be a teacher and he became a teacher. He worked at it.

RUBIN

(Suddenly taut)

That's enough, mother. Never mind making comparisons. It isn't going to help.

MARY

I only meant you stood for something good. (To Lee) If you opened your selfish eyes for once.

RUBIN

I don't care what he does with his life.

LEE

Oh thanks a lot, dad. You made my whole day.

RUBIN

I'm sorry. You make me say things I don't mean.

MARY

He's only concerned for you. Like we all are. Worried sick with your foolish waste of time.

LEE

I'm not wasting my time!

RUBIN

You are too! And we're going to do something about it.

LEE

(Quick suspicion)

We?

MARY

Like any strong family, what one does affects us all. We should be advising each other with love and compassion like the apostles tell us.

RUBIN

Never mind, mother. He doesn't understand.

MARY

Well I think he does. If you want my honest advice, Lee, I think you should enroll in Tech school this fall.

LEE

What for?

MARY

To learn a craft, a skill, so you can get a decent job for once.

LEE

I don't want to go to school.

MARY

Why not? Look at Richard — back from the mission field and straight into college to be a lawyer. (With a glance at Wendy) ... There's just no stopping him. Well, you've always been good with your hands.

WENDY

Don't push him, mama.

MARY

I'm not pushing. It's just that his warehouse job isn't worth the trip into the city every day.

LEE

You're right. That's why I quit my warehouse job yesterday.

MARY

You quit your job? Again? That's five times in the last five months! There's poverty and unemployment in the streets — and you just quit?

LEE

I got tired of it. C'mon there's lots of crummy jobs in the world.

MARY

You said it, I didn't. You go and quit your job for no good reason, without another sound idea in your head....

LEE

Who said I never had another idea?

MARY

Do you?

WENDY

Oh stop it! All of you! Some special day! Well if you don't care I certainly don't either!

(Suddenly)

MARY

Wendy...

(Alarmed)

(WENDY moves abruptly toward the gate where she meets FINGLE COOK, the Bishop, arriving. He has a fishing pole in one hand and a Book of Mormon in the other. They collide.)

FINGLE

Hey, slow down there!

WENDY

Ooops! Sorry Bishop.

(startled, embarrassed.)

FINGLE

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When I saw the birds scatter I knew a woman was having a tantrum and I still didn't prepare myself.

WENDY

I didn't see you coming. I was just on my way over to the store. Did I bang you with the gate?

FINGLE

(Rubbing his shin)

Next time I'll blow a bugle... Hello everybody!

MARY

Good morning, Bishop. If you can still walk, come on in.

FINGLE

Coming right up!

(Pause)

(He makes a move to jump the fence, but changes his mind at the last moment and comes through the gate.)

One big hug for my favorite niece.... (They hug) Mmmm... that was so good I'm going to give you the day off.

RUBIN

How are you this morning, Fingle?

FINGLE

In the pig-pen I tumble; I don't seem to grumble. Are you ready to go?

RUBIN

I've been waiting for you.

FINGLE

Well, here I am! I've hung the "gone fishing" sign. All I need now is a quiet stream.

MARY

What's the Book for, Bishop? Are you going to try some scripture for bait?

FINGLE

(Laughs)

No, I thought I'd work on the family genealogy for a while. It's one of Lord's greatest commandments in the latter-days — giving names to the dead. My ancestors keep me awake at night. I'm knee deep in the sixteenth century and they're still calling.

WENDY

Do you really hear them, Bishop?

FINGLE

I hear them in my heart.

WENDY

You won't quit until you stick old Mormon himself on top of the tree, will you?

FINGLE

You're sitting on a mass of tangled roots young miss but I'll straighten them out if it's the last thing I do. I'll catch fish with one hand and baptize the dead with the other. (Laughter) ... People hold people together — the living and the dead. A long chain of faith in God our Father.

(Sings)

Of all the marvels I recall
Connected with this Mormon hall
Is this strange fact that still prevails —
'Twas built without the use of nails.

WENDY

I love you.

FINGLE

Save your affection. From what I hear you might be needing it.

WENDY

What's that supposed to mean?

FINGLE

Oh nothing ... Except I always get that darn twitch in my cheek whenever there's a wedding in the wind. Right here. See that?

(Twitches his cheek madly
at her.)

WENDY

Go jump in the coulee.

FINGLE

Congratulations, Wendy. I'm very happy for you and Richard. To tell the truth though, I was expecting it. No, it didn't surprise me a bit. I always knew you were meant for each other.

(Pause)

(LEE Laughs to himself)

What are you laughing at, Lee?

LEE

Not much, Fingle.

FINGLE

Bishop to you, young man.

LEE

Just the way you've got everybody's lives cut and dried.

FINGLE

I haven't got yours cut and dried, that's for darn sure. Are you going fishing with your father and me?

RUBIN

He says he's too tired this morning, Bishop.

LEE

I said I've made other plans.

RUBIN

Well I suppose if I'd been out all night drinking like a fool I wouldn't feel like it either.

FINGLE

(Shaking his head)

Half asleep and still a tramp-of-the-night before.

LEE

I'm sure it breaks your heart.

FINGLE

(sincerely)

If you only knew.

LEE

Oh stop it, Fingle. I hate you feeling sorry for me like some old boot in the gutter. And that goes for all of you. There is nothing wrong with me.

WENDY

No one said there was, Lee. C'mon let's go for a walk. Just the two of us.

LEE

No thanks, Wendy. I don't need you trying to hide me. I'm staying right here. You couldn't drag me away from this happy house with a team of horses. If anyone objects to my life they can just try ... (Challengingly) Fingle?

MARY

Lee!

FINGLE

(Laughs)

Tangle with you? ... Oh wouldn't you be surprised.

(Pause)

(RUBIN tenses to the situation)

No I've got a better idea. Why don't you stay sober tonight, come to church in the morning and arm wrestle with the Lord. If He doesn't twist you soundly and give you a good kiss afterwards I'll eat my hat.

LEE

That simple, eh?

FINGLE

The truth is simple... It's not your life I object to, son. Your living body I love. It's how you manage it that saddens me. I crossed through the park on the way over here and picked up a dozen beer bottles in the grass. I heard there was a big party last night. Old Mrs. Christensen told me. She couldn't get to sleep again with the noise. Were you there?

LEE

Why point your finger at me? I'm not the only person in the country who has a beer now and again.

RUBIN

And again and again and again.

LEE

I wasn't there!

MARY

Oh c'mon you two. Now stop this. It's too early in the morning.

FINGLE

Well it's disgraceful. That's all I'm saying.

LEE

Y'know Uncle Fingle, if there was a public drinking place in this town things like that wouldn't happen.

FINGLE

You must be joking. There will never be a dirty drinking hole in this town.

LEE

Wanna bet? There's more people coming to live here every day. And they aren't all Mormons. You gotta face it Fingle, a big change is coming.

FINGLE

Not if I can help it.

LEE

They pay taxes; they got rights. Why should a person have to drive clear into the city for a bar-made drink?

FINGLE

Because this town has been dry for seventy years and is going to stay dry!

MARY

Don't get upset, Bishop. He's just teasing you.

LEE

No I'm serious. When enough people demand a plebiscite we're gonna get a bar or two and there's nothing you can do about it.

FINGLE

Over my dead body!

RUBIN

Now Fingle...

LEE

First the Lion's Club will get a liquor license, and the hotel, and then someone will open a restaurant with a lounge. You wait and see. People are asking for it right now.

FINGLE

They're asking for it alright.

LEE

Don't worry Fingle, a bar in town isn't going to destroy the Church.

MARY

Alright Lee, that's enough! That's all I'm going to take from you for one day. Ever since you crawled out of bed you've been a thorn in the ointment. What's the matter with you?

LEE

Nothing's the matter with me!

MARY

Just listen to yourself.

LEE

Oh be quiet mum.

(Pause)

(RUBIN takes a threatening step at him, and then stops)

Why did you stop, dad? You could toss me over the fence without even breathing hard... Good luck fishing.

(He exits from yard.)

WENDY

Lee! Wait for me please... Lee?

(She goes after him.)

(Pause)

FINGLE

I've tried. God knows I've tried. But that boy arouses the infantry in my blood.

MARY

It's your fault too, Bishop. You always get off on the wrong foot with him. He's not a bad kid... just confused. Why I'd have ten more just like him... if it was God's will... which it wasn't.

FINGLE

I'd do anything to help. Honest I would. But he won't let me get close to him.

RUBIN

Have you really tried?

FINGLE

I'm not saying it's been easy. Sometimes when I look at him...

RUBIN

What?

FINGLE

Never mind.

RUBIN

What do you see?

FINGLE

Nothing.

Our father?

(Pause)

FINGLE

It's your fault for not stepping down on him ages ago. If you want my advice you'll show him the door with the point of your shoe. Don't you see — he's daring you! ... I'm sorry. I don't know what made me say that.

RUBIN

Yes you do... and so do I.

FINGLE

Nonsense. Just forgive me. Please will you?

RUBIN

Will you forgive him?

FINGLE

Have you?

(Pause)

My sons all went on missions and are raising good Mormon families all over the country. Not one bad seed among them.

RUBIN

(Furiously)

He's my child. I can't just throw him out like a spotted potato. I think you'd like that. So you wouldn't have to look in his face!

(Pause)

I won't do it, Fingle. The family is the centre of everything the Church believes. How many times have I heard you say that? You! The one committed to our family geneology... A long chain. Fingle? Faith and forgiveness? Baptism for the dead?

FINGLE

I don't think I like the sounds of that, Rubin.

RUBIN

It wasn't meant to be pleasant.

FINGLE

You have no right! ... Not you.

(Pause)

Are we going fishing or aren't we going fishing?

MARY

(To ease the pressure)

I heard there's been good fishing down in the reservoir. If you hurry maybe you can still beat the Saturday rush from the city.

FINGLE

Darn those people anyway. That old fishing hole used to be ours — all ours! Not to mention that new 7-11 store in town. Who needs it!

MARY

The township isn't the same as it used to be, is it?

FINGLE

Well, the Church is growing like a dandelion patch and that's what counts.

MARY

So are Rubin's classes at school — with non-members mostly.

FINGLE

Non-members everywhere. There was a day I could walk down Main Street and know at least ten things about everyone I met. Now what? Sometimes I feel like a stranger and I've lived here my whole life.

MARY

The town's looking for a change I guess. They come from everywhere looking for quiet.

FINGLE

Our quiet.

MARY

Oh you can't blame them for coming. The city and their jobs are close. The lots are bigger here. The taxes are less. It's a bedroom town.

FINGLE

Still our town.

MARY

Is it? (With real wonder) ... Do you think so?

FINGLE

Yes. But it would make it a lot easier keeping it ours if they didn't bring their bad habits with them. Those beer bottles in the park. What a disgrace! Whoever left them. If my mother was still alive it would break her heart.

(Pause)

(He and RUBIN look at each other with a certain longing. FINGLE turns away first.)

RUBIN

Fingle...? Let's drive out to the old homestead. We can take our fishing poles along. We can follow the coulee for a few miles to where it crosses the old home piece. We can...

FINGLE

No!

RUBIN

Why not?

FINGLE

Because I will not go near that place and you know it. Why are you trying to hurt me today?

Rubin... MARY

RUBIN
I'm not trying to hurt you. I want you to go to the homestead with me.
I want you to go in the house with me.

FINGLE
No!

RUBIN
Please.

FINGLE
Leave our father alone, Rubin. He's dead and gone. All gone.

RUBIN
Is he?

FINGLE
Yes!

(Pause)

RUBIN
There is something I want you to know, Fingle. You as well, Mary.

MARY
What is it?

RUBIN
I'm planning to move back out to the farm.

FINGLE (Astonished.)
You what?

MARY
Rubin.

RUBIN
I've been thinking about it all summer.

FINGLE
What ever put that crazy thought in your head?

RUBIN
The lease renewal on the land is due at the end of the month...

FINGLE
You can't!

RUBIN
I'm going to tell Gifford to move his machinery off after harvest.

FINGLE
We still own the land. Isn't that enough for you?

RUBIN
You don't understand, Fingle. I want to live in that house again.

FINGLE
Good Lord.

MARY

What about your classes, Rubin? Surely you won't give up your teaching.

RUBIN

Yes Mary, I am.

FINGLE

But why? For a walk through the past? You won't spend a winter in that house before the sounds drive you out again.

RUBIN

The truth is, I'm doing it for Lee.

FINGLE

For Lee!

RUBIN

He needs a grip on something. You know that as well as I do. He's lost and confounded. He goes around with his head on the end of a string half the time.

FINGLE

Forgive me Mary, but that boy doesn't appreciate the good eyes God gave him. He's never committed himself to anything, least of all work. You're in for a big disappointment. He'll never go along with you.

RUBIN

He will! He has to!

(Pause)

MARY

Why didn't you say anything about this before, Rubin?

RUBIN

I wanted to be sure, Mary. I didn't mean to spring it on you like this. I meant to talk to you first I did. But this morning ... Trust me. I know I'm doing the right thing ... for Lee ... for us.

(Pause)

FINGLE

Don't leave us, Rubin. You're committed to the town.

RUBIN

I'll open classes in the fall and stay there until the school board finds someone to replace me.

FINGLE

But your Church duties...

RUBIN

I won't stop coming to Church. Don't be silly.

FINGLE

But you promised when your own children were ready to make homes of their own that you'd offer to take some small Indian children into your house. Remember? It's one of the Church's most important works, Rubin. The Lord has a special place for our Lamenite brethren you know that.

RUBIN

Of course I know. Well we still can.

FINGLE

Not in that house! It's too old and small. Gifford's had grain in it. It would take a small fortune to make it proper again. But most of all it's too far away from the community.

RUBIN

Listen to me...

FINGLE

There's a couple of little orphans from the Blood Reserve who desperately need placement. I've been meaning to tell you. Honest I have.

RUBIN

I believe you, Fingle. But it won't change how I feel.

FINGLE

Mary... There's room in your heart and there's room in your home. Your health is wonderful and you've kindness to burn.

(Slight pause)

(MARY is speechless)

You'd enjoy the challenge and it'd give you something precious to do with all the free time you'll soon be having. When Mildred was alive it was one of our deepest desires. Bless her heart. She was a lot like you.

RUBIN

Fingle, please, we know how important the Lord's work is. We've never shirked our duties.

FINGLE

But you've got this big, beautiful home which will soon empty it's youth into the world. Close to the church, immersed in the community.

RUBIN

But Fingle...

FINGLE

So what a heavenly welcome that would be for a couple of Indian kids who've known nothing but pain and loneliness their whole lives. All that's needed is your desire. But if you leave the community...

RUBIN

Fingle! Please... You don't understand how important this is to me... I have to do it.

FINGLE

I think you're foolish, Rubin. It isn't worth it. This town needs you; needs your influence in the school. The children all look up to you.

RUBIN

BUT MY OWN SON DOESN'T! (Pause) ... A farm's a good place for a young man. We'll do it together. Like father and son.

FINGLE

I see. So you want him to have everything we didn't. Am I right? AM I?

(Pause)

Don't go back there, Rubin. There's nothing for you there but a lot of bad memories. Forget them.

RUBIN

Should we forget everything?

FINGLE

Of course not. Our mother was a good woman, even though she tolerated too much, too long from that man. She used herself up trying to love him, and died of a tired heart.

(Pause)

Go fishing without me. And may Heaven guide you back again.

RUBIN

Our father, Fingle.

FINGLE

He can rot in Hell.

(Pause)

(FINGLE starts out of the yard.)

RUBIN

Fingle!

FINGLE

What?

RUBIN

I can't forget. I've tried. But sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night, hear the sound of feet stumbling through the old house. A chair falling. The smell of whisky. The fighting and screaming. Our mother's sobs... Then I can't sleep. I want to sleep. I try to. But the sounds won't stop!

(Pause)

I'm going back there, Fingle. With my wife. With my son. With your blessing... or without.

(Pause)

FINGLE

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You were sleeping that night, little brother. You slept through it all.

(Pause)

RUBIN

Well Fingle.

(Pause)

FINGLE

Without.

(Long pause)

(FINGLE leaves the yard.)

MARY

Are you alright, Rubin?

RUBIN

I'm fine... Forgive me for not telling you my thoughts sooner.

MARY

I trust you. I do. Just don't worry yourself. Put it out of your mind for now. Let's finish the day with Wendy.

(Pause)

(No reaction from RUBIN.)

I want to show you something, Rubin. Come here and see.

(Pause)

(She reaches into her sewing basket and brings out a beautiful patchwork quilt.)

Look! I'm making it for Wendy and Richard. Don't tell anyone. It's a surprise... Can you see what I've done. I cut these patches from the old clothing trunks upstairs. When I'm finished, this quilt will bear cloth from our family as far back as the building of Nauvoo and the migration to the Salt Lake Valley.

RUBIN

(Looking.)

It's lovely, Mary.

MARY

It's for their baby cradle... when they have one. Isn't it pretty?

(Pause)

(RUBIN nods.)

RUBIN

Mary... I'm going to drive out to the old homestead.

MARY

I thought you hated that place, Rubin.

RUBIN

But I have to. Don't you see?

MARY

No. Not quite.

RUBIN

You will. You will... I'll be back for dinner.

(Pause)

(He exits yard)

MARY

(Stitching quilt)

The other night I had a dream,
I dreamt that I had died;
I flapped my wings like an eagle,
And flew into the skies.
And there I saw Moroni,
A-sitting on a spire;
He asked me up and said we'd sup
At his most humble fire:

Oh —

(Pause)

Mary, Mary... Silly old cow... Not so young any more. (Trying the word in her mouth) ...Grandma. "Grand-ma" (Shudders) ... Not so old either. Funny how time flies though. (Sings) "The other night I had a dream" ... What? ... Oh I can't complain. Shan't complain... "I dreamt that I could fly" ...Tch. Silly old cow. Just listen to yourself. "...fly-yyy."

(Pause)

Better put the roast in the oven.

(She folds the quilt and places it back in the basket. She goes into the house... WENDY and LEE return to the yard in mid-conversation.)

WENDY

C'mon Lee, don't be such a sore head. I don't want to fight with you.

LEE

Either do I.

WENDY

Well you're making it awfully hard to be nice to you.

LEE

If you got something to say, Wendy, jump right in and say it. You've got that pious look on your face again.

WENDY

You wouldn't listen anyway.

LEE

Look, I told you. Don't get upset about Fingle. It's just a game with us. Like cards. We've been playing it for years. He don't like me and I don't like him. Simple! No harm done. A good Bishop, a bad bugger, a sunny day — Shuffle!

WENDY

I worry about you, Lee.

LEE

Everybody worries about me! Look I'll get another job if it will make you happy... Or maybe I won't get another job. See? I'm a free man. I make my own decisions. Maybe I'll sell my car instead. It's having the biscuit anyway. I'll get around. I've got plenty of friends in the city.

WENDY

But not many around here... Why do you want everyone to hate you?

LEE

Who said I wanted everyone to hate me? That's a stupid thing to say.

WENDY

Well you act like it. I'm not blind y'know.

LEE

I am what I am! I can't help it if people don't applaud my every move.

WENDY

Don't be silly. You're the one with the grudge. You won't give in for a second.

LEE

Give in! You're damn-right I won't! Why should I sing along if I don't want to?

WENDY

What do you want?

LEE

I want to build a boat and sail to South America.

WENDY

(Challengingly)

Baloney.

LEE

I'm serious! ... Oh forget it, Wendy. You wouldn't understand.

(Pause)

(LEE moves to fence and looks off.)

WENDY

Lee...? Why are you still living at home? I mean if you're so dissatisfied why don't you leave? Why don't you just build your silly boat and sail to Timbuctu? ... Are you afraid to be on your own?

LEE

No!

WENDY

So why?

LEE

Because I like my home. Is that so hard to believe? I like my room. I like my bed. I like my wallpaper with the ships. I like my food in front of me... And I like you.

(Pause)

(She hugs him dearly) 28

WENDY

I love you, Lee. We all love you very much.

LEE

Hey c'mon, Wendy... don't do that.

(Untangling himself from her.)

WENDY

What's the matter with you? Can't you stand a little hug from your sister?

LEE

That's the trouble with this family — too much hugging.

WENDY

Goodness me! Remind me never to touch you again.

LEE

Don't be stupid.

WENDY

You don't be stupid. I try to show a little affection and you snub me. Well forget it Charlie... What's happened to you this summer anyway? Any time someone gets too close you quill-up like a porcupine. And I've been hearing stories about you that make me cry.

LEE

What stories?

WENDY

How you drink all the time and take drugs and stuff. Why do you do it?

LEE

Why does anybody do it? Maybe you should try it sometime.

WENDY

Nooo-thanks. I heard you stumbling through the house at three o'clock this morning. You couldn't have been more noisy if you tried. What did you do last night? You're all red-eyes and stringy looking.

LEE

(Too casually)

I fell in love.

WENDY

Horrors. With what?

LEE

That's right sis, true love. Makes your eyes red, your lips puffy, and rumples your clothes... before they come off.

WENDY

Oh yeh? Sounds more like a truck and car collision.

LEE

Now you're getting warmer.

WENDY

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Oh I've seen your girl friends. Hate to break this to you brother, but big hips don't make big hopes.

LEE

Straight from the mouth of Venus.

WENDY

Sor-ry. I didn't mean to insult your taste, ahem, in women.

LEE

Well stick around, girly... You might be surprised.

WENDY

What do you mean? ... Don't tell me you invited someone over! You mean a girl?

LEE

Don't fall over, you'll hurt yourself.

WENDY

I thought you were just making something up to get away from dad.

LEE

So did dad. He thinks I spend all my time in back alleys chewing on old tires.

WENDY

Wow! This is a first for the old family records. You've really invited a girl to the house, huh?

LEE

Don't worry. I'll wash all the germs off her.

WENDY

I better tell mum to set another plate at the table.

LEE

Don't bother... She isn't staying long. Just passing through.

WENDY

Oh. I see.

(Pause)

(LEE wanders to the fence.)

Have you known her long?

LEE

Most of the summer.

WENDY

You never mentioned her. Is she pretty?

LEE

Not bad.

Like her a lot? WENDY

Sort of. LEE

I see. WENDY

Whaddya see? You don't see anything. LEE

C'mon gimme some credit. I've only known you your whole life. I can feel your blood moving from here. So you like her a lot, eh? Maybe I know her. Is she Mormon? WENDY

Is that all you care about? Does the sun go up and down for the Mormons? LEE

Mormons fall in love and get hurt too y'know. WENDY

After a fashion. LEE

You've got no right to say that, Lee. It's mean and stupid! WENDY

And I suppose you know all about love! Alright Venus, lemme have it. What's it all about? Is Richard Weber the whole story? LEE

Mind your own business. WENDY

Good ol' Richard — fist full of honey. Did his mission leave him brimming with passion? LEE

I wouldn't tell you anyway. WENDY

Well he didn't waste any time getting down to business, did he? LEE

I hate you sometimes. WENDY

Why are you so cock-eyed defensive? Hell, it's written in the wind! LEE

Oh be quiet. WENDY

LEE

He told me at his homecoming party he would ask you. How about that for poise? I remember it clearly. He wanted me to be the first to know. He wanted my blessing.

WENDY

You don't remember anything. You were drunk out of your mind at Richard's homecoming. I was so embarrassed I could've killed you.

LEE

(Sings)

He load you with babies and send you to meeting
And make you work for all you're getting.
Milk his cow and milk you in a pail;
Take it to the kitchen, hang it on a nail.

WENDY

You make me sick, Lee. I don't believe you. He was your best friend before he went on his mission. He's still a wonderful person. He has so much to give.

LEE

(Cutting her off sharply.)

Don't describe him! ... I've known him longer than you have. There are things in him you'll never know, and that's a goddamn shame.

WENDY

I think you've gone crazy.

LEE

You and everyone else who lives in that big brick cookie-cutter down the street.

WENDY

Open your eyes you idiot! You're going to hurt yourself!

LEE

So are you!

WENDY

Don't be ridiculous.

LEE

I suppose you really want to marry him.

WENDY

Yes!

LEE

Look, forget about populating the Church for half a minute and take a peek at yourself. What happened to all those dreams you had when you were a kid? Remember? A ballet dancer — you were pretty good for ten; an airline stewardess — travelling around the world; a broadcaster, like Carol Taylor, for heavensake! You wanted those things for yourself.

WENDY

And you wanted to be a pirate!

LEE

I still wanna be a pirate!

WENDY

Oh stop it! You're just trying to hurt me!

LEE

Do you love him? ... I said do you love him?

WENDY

Sure I love him. And love grows. Doesn't it? Well doesn't it?

(A young woman comes toward the yard. Her name is BETH and she is quite lovely. Her face is a blend of impatience and curiosity.)

BETH

Hello. Lee?

LEE

Hey! Beth. I was beginning to wonder if you were coming. Did you get lost?

BETH

No, not at all. Your directions were perfect. I parked my bus in the park across the lane. Is that okay?

LEE

Sure, anywhere.

WENDY

Ahem.

LEE

Oh, Beth. This is my little sister, Wendy. She thinks she wants to get married.

WENDY

Lee!

BETH

(a little surprised.)

Really? Well... congratulations.

WENDY

(Uncomfortably)

I think I better get the vegetables cut up before mum does it all. Nice meeting you, Beth. You're welcome to stay for dinner if you like.

(She goes quickly into house.)

LEE

Hey Wendy! You don't have to go. I was just...

BETH

What's wrong? Is it something I said?

LEE

No, it's my fault. Me and my big mouth. Oh well, not to worry. She has a way of bouncing back.

BETH

She looks so young.

(Pause)

(He looks once toward the house and then kisses her.)

LEE

I've been thinking about you.

BETH

Have you?

(Looking around the yard curiously)

LEE

I was wondering where you were. I was afraid you might have decided not to stop... and say goodbye.

BETH

I said I would didn't I? Sorry I'm late. I haven't been watching the time.

LEE

You never do.

BETH

To tell the truth though, I've been in town for quite a while.

LEE

(Surprised)

What have you been doing? There's nothing to do here.

BETH

I was just... walking around. Looking at things.

LEE

Looking at what? There's nothing to see.

BETH

Sure there is. Everyone's home is different. There's so many open spaces and everyone owns some kind of animal.

LEE

Big deal.

BETH

You won't believe this but I've never been in a barn before. So I went in one. And there was a cow.

LEE

So?

BETH

Just standing there! With a black and white dog curled up between its back legs and a cat on a fence post licking its paw. All three of them stopped what they were doing and looked at me.

(Pause)

(Vacantly staring away.)

LEE

I do a pretty good turkey gobble. Wanna hear it?

BETH

Pardon me?

LEE

Never mind.

BETH

Anyway, it made me feel kind of funny being here by myself. There certainly are a lot of children running around everywhere... Lee? Why didn't you tell me before that you were Mormon?

(Pause)

(With some hesitation.)

LEE

I didn't think it was important. How did you find out?

BETH

I read it on the church... I always thought Mormons dressed in black and lived in colonies.

LEE

You're thinking of Hutterites.

BETH

Were you hiding it from me on purpose?

LEE

I didn't think you'd care about my home life.

BETH

I don't care particularly.

LEE

Don't you?

BETH

Well I did wonder at first, but then I got used to seeing you in the bar so alone all the time ... I just never would've guessed that home was this.

(Pause)

(Looking about more closely.)

It's a pretty home. Home sweet home, eh? It looks old. It looks lived in.

LEE

Do you want to go inside?

BETH (Abruptly)
No. I have to be going now. I've got a lot of driving ahead of me.

LEE
Hey you can't go yet! You just got here.

BETH
I'm getting kind of restless. I really should get going.

LEE
Why don't you stay for a while, Beth? I'd like my folks to meet you. I really would.

BETH
No I can't.

LEE
Please.

BETH
Well... no. No. Like I said, I'm getting restless to move.

LEE
Sure but what about me? I might never see you again.

(Pause)

Beth? Can we be alone with each other for a while?

BETH
We are alone.

LEE (touching her)
I mean really alone. There's things I want... to say to you.

BETH
Oh. Okay. We can go for a walk.

LEE
Could we go to your bus?

(Slight pause)

BETH
Alright. Sure. I'd like that.

(They exit into street.
Blackout.
End of Scene One.)

(Two hours later.
The yard is empty, but
from the house comes the
sound of chatter and
laughter at meal time...
In a moment LEE storms
into the yard with BETH
coming after.)

BETH

C'mon Lee. Don't be like that. Not on our last day together.

LEE

A lot you care.

BETH

I do care.

LEE

Then why don't you show it?

(Pause)

BETH

Lee... I'm sorry. But I just can't take you with me. Honest I can't.

LEE

Why not? What's wrong with me?

BETH

Nothing! I think you're beautiful... It's just not part of my plans.

LEE

I thought you never made plans. That's what you said. Impulsive! Remember?

BETH

But I like being alone. My privacy is important to me. Besides I'm not that special. You'd get bored with me before we got over the mountains.

LEE

Alright then leave! LEAVE! ... Get out of my sight.

(BETH starts to leave.
LEE watches after her
with longing. BETH stops.
Turns around. LEE turns
away.)

BETH

I can't leave you like this. Goddamn you, you know I can't.

(Pause)

I've never seen you like this before. I don't like you looking blue.
We've had such good times together. It's awful to see you this way.
You were always the one making me feel good.

LEE (Touching her.)
I know what it feels like to lie beside you.

BETH (Returning the touch)
You treat me so... Oh well! What the hell. Life goes on, eh?

(Pause) (She walks away from him)

I should never have come here today. We nearly messed things up.
That's what happens when you get too close to someone.

LEE
So then why did you come here today?

BETH
I don't know. Because you wanted me to.

LEE
Didn't you want to?

BETH
Yah. I did.

LEE
So what's the big grudge?

BETH
Nothing. Don't listen to me. I make little sense at the best of times.

(Pause) (Laughter from the house)

What's going on in there? A party?

LEE
No, just dinner.

BETH
Sounds like a feast.

LEE
Oh sure, my mom really cooks up a storm for company.

(Pause) (BETH strolls nervously)

What's wrong?

BETH
Nothing... Well what if someone comes out?

LEE
Don't worry, you look okay.

BETH
No telling signs?

LEE

Your cheeks are a little red.

BETH

I feel tumbled.

LEE

You were.

(From the house comes singing. The song at the end of the scene begins to underscore)

BETH

God! My family never sang around the table. In fact we hardly ever ate together. When we were kids we ate in the kitchen. My parents liked their meals quiet in the dining room. But that was fine with us. I never learned to use a fork properly but we had some awfully good food fights. I was a maniac with mashed potatoes.

LEE

And cruel with corn?

BETH

Positively popping with peas!

(Pause)

LEE

You never talk much about your parents. Didn't you get along?

BETH

(Very aloof)

I don't know if I ever tried. There's always ways around it, and I didn't care. Whenever things got bad I didn't wait a second — me and my guitar were out the door! One time I just didn't bother going back. It was easy. Really easy.

LEE

Haven't you ever wanted to go back?

BETH

(Same)

Nope. Not yet anyway. Oh I get tempted once in a while, but only when I get depressed and that's not a good enough reason. I guess I don't want to. Plain and simple. I mean I like what I'm doing. No commitments, no attachments. I'm really a selfish person.

LEE

You say that like you're proud of it.

BETH

Maybe I am. I mean I want a lot of things for myself. A lot of experiences. You only live once, eh?

LEE

You're right. That's how I feel.

(Pause)

(BETH laughs softly and then lifts her ear to the music again)

BETH
You don't get-off on it, do you? I mean the whole Mormon-thing.

LEE
It doesn't get-off on me either so there you go.

(Pause)

Do you believe in God?

BETH (Laughs)
To tell the truth I've never thought about it much. As long as I'm free to move around and play my guitar I'm content. Maybe if I broke my fingers and went to prison I'd think about God.

LEE (Admiringly)
You don't let anything get in your way do you?

BETH
Not if I can go around it with a smile.

LEE
No one tells you what to do.

BETH
I avoid it like the plague.

LEE
I'm the same way!

BETH (Friendly but not to encourage)
Sort of I guess.

LEE
Oh yah, I really am! Ever since I was a kid I always made my own mind up about things. People thought I was just trying to be different.

BETH
Maybe you were.

LEE
No! Not at all! When my best friend Richard and I used to play horses — you know, down on our hands and knees. Well I always wanted to be a giraffe! It used to make him so mad. We would end up fighting all the time!

BETH (Getting caught up)
You're crazy! Why a giraffe?

LEE
Because they could look into the tops of trees! Horses couldn't!

Oh!

BETH

LEE

I was never like anyone else. I never did what was expected of me.

BETH

I bet that made your parents mad.

LEE

You can say that again. My dad would tell me a hundred times a week to stay out of his father's trunks in the attic. But I used to get into them all the time.

BETH

What was in the trunks?

LEE

Mostly old clothes and shoes and things. And some letters. From my grandpa.

BETH

To your father?

LEE

No, he never wrote to my dad. They were to my grandma. He sent them from all over the country. (With a laugh) He was kind of a bad bastard. My dad's family were farmers then. My grandpa homesteaded a place just outside of town. They weren't Mormons yet but the missionaries were all over the place. His family finally converted but old grampa Adam never did. He couldn't sit still long enough to go to church. He was a real character. Every winter after the harvest was off he'd light out looking for things to do. He kept getting these crazy ideas to make a fortune. Gold in the Yukon, a saloon in Fort MacMurray, horse racing in Montana, rodeos and poker. You name it! I don't think the money meant a thing to him but he sure had fun trying. And no one told him what to do!

BETH

(Very amused)

Sounds a lot like us!

LEE

He was a giraffe of the first order!

BETH

Is he still alive? Lets go visit him!

LEE

No, he's been dead a long time, when they were still living on the farm. But I got those letters. I could let you read them. No one knows I have them except Wendy. They're a riot! He wrote down all about his experiences, every crazy thing he did. He drew pictures of himself in the margins and made up funny songs like:

There once was a man with testitis,
Who had balls of two different sizes,
One was so small,
Really no ball at all,
The other was big and won prizes!

BETH (Laughing)
No wonder his family joined the Mormons!

LEE (Laughing)
They hated him! He was always leaving home and coming back weeks later with people chasing him. He was kinda crazy I guess and drank way too much, but he had a real passion for living.

BETH
How did he die?

(Pause) (The singing from the house subsides)

LEE
He shot himself in the head.

BETH
God, I'm sorry.

LEE
He came home one night and stuck his favorite shotgun in his mouth.

BETH
Why did he do it?

LEE
I don't really know. No one ever told me about it until ... You see after it happened the family moved off the farm and never went back. We still own the land and rent it out but the old house is all boarded up. My dad and especially my Uncle Fingle told us never to go in there. That of course made it impossible for me to stay out. So one day my best friend and I broke into the house and started looking around. We found one small room in the attic that's wall-to-wall blood stains.

(Pause)

So I asked my dad about it. He told me that grampa was a very sick man and decided that he didn't want to live any more. Those were his words... then he kicked me so hard I ... The old shotgun is locked up in the gun cupboard. I've always wanted it but dad won't let me touch it.

(Pause)

Poor grampa Adam. I wish he were alive to tell me some stories.

(Long pause)

Beth...? Please take me with you.

(Pause)

(BETH strolls away
pensively. Stops.
Tilts her head, suddenly
aware)

BETH

They've stopped singing... Do you wish you were in there with them?

(Pause)

LEE

No.

(Pause)

(She looks at him)

BETH

Okay Lee. You win.

LEE

Do you mean it, Beth? I mean really?

BETH

I think I'm full of shit. It must be the prairies. Gimme a city
full of paranoia any day... (Urging him) Well?

LEE

Well what?

BETH

Go pack a suit-case before I change my mind.

LEE

Just like that?

BETH

Like what?

LEE

Well I have to explain to my parents.

BETH

Explain what?

LEE

I have to say goodbye.

BETH

How long does that take?

LEE

Beth... Go away for a while and come back later.

BETH

(Impatiently)

Why?

LEE

Please? I want to take my time with this. I want to do it right.
Do you understand?

BETH

Look, if it's going to be a big hassle...

LEE

No hassle. Promise. I just can't tell them while you're here. Is there anything wrong with that?

BETH

Nope. I guess not. Good luck.

(Pause)

LEE

Y'know I've never opened myself up to anyone like I have with you.

BETH

There's nothing special about me.

LEE

You're beautiful.

BETH

Don't flatter me.

LEE

We'll do it together. Two for each other, two for the road. Right?

BETH

We'll have some good times.

LEE

Will you be alright by yourself for a while?

BETH

Of course I will. Don't be silly. I'll just walk around and meet some more cows.

LEE

Stay outa trouble.

BETH

That's what I do best. See yuh in a while.

(They kiss. BETH leaves. LEE follows her to the gate and watches her go. FINGLE, WENDY and RICHARD WEBER come out of the house in mid-conversation...)

RICHARD

... I remember how discouraged I was.

FINGLE

I remember the feeling myself.

RICHARD

I'd been tracting for five whole months and hadn't made one conversion.

FINGLE

The good old days.

RICHARD

I'd made contact with a young couple, Charles and Lise, and I'd been seeing them regularly but I couldn't convince them to take the step. I was really beginning to feel incompetent. I think the Lord was testing me and I felt so lonely inside.

WENDY

Did you? I wrote to you nearly every week.

RICHARD

(With a laugh)

That only made it worse for me. I think I would have quit and come running home to you if it hadn't been for my mission president, brother Raymond.

WENDY

What did he do?

RICHARD

He took me for a long walk along the river one evening. I tried to tell him how angry and frustrated I was. He seemed to understand right away and explained to me how "the Lord has patience with us..."

FINGLE

"...therefore so must we of Him." Good old brother Raymond.

RICHARD

He told me to stay alone and pray for a while and he's pray for me for strength.

WENDY

Did you?

RICHARD

The whole evening! And when I got off my knees I felt my whole body open up and I knew in my heart what to say to Charles and Lise... The next day I went to their home, but before I could get my mouth open they said that during the night their house had been filled with the Spirit of the Lord and they wanted to be baptized. I started to cry. I couldn't help it. I broke down and cried.

FINGLE

(Sings)

Ye saints who dwell on Europe's shore
Prepare yourself for many more,
To leave behind your native land,
For sure God's judgments are at hand.
For you must cross the raging main
Before the promised land you gain
And with the faithful make a start
To cross the plains with your handcart.

(RICHARD joins him)

FINGLE (continued)

For some must push and some must pull
As we go marching up the hill;
So merrily on our way we go
Until we reach the Valley-o!

LEE (Coming forward into view)
Bravo! Hooray for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir!

WENDY
Well look what the wind blew in.

RICHARD
Lee! There you are you old bounder! Where have you been? We missed you at dinner.

LEE (Casually)
Hello Richard.

RICHARD (Squeezes WENDY)
I wish you could've been with us.

LEE
Sorry. I got tied up.

RICHARD
Haven't seen you around much lately. Why haven't you dropped over to see me?

LEE
I have. You've always been over here.

RICHARD
I guess we keep missing each other.

FINGLE
Lee keeps irregular hours.

WENDY
Are you hungry, Lee? I could build you up a plate. There's lots left.

LEE
No thanks, Wendy-pendy. I'm not hungry. Richard can have my share.

RICHARD
You haven't changed a bit. Still smug and cocky as ever.

LEE
No you're wrong. I've changed a lot since you've been away saving souls. See? I'm taller.

RICHARD
You're still crazy. Hey how 'bout a game of horseshoes? It's been a long time since I clobbered you. Whaddya say?

LEE
No thanks. Ask Fingle. The horseshoes are under my bed.

RICHARD
Well Bishop?

FINGLE
Okay, one game. But I'm warning you, you're meeting with a beating.

RICHARD
And you're flirtin' with a hurtin'. I'll get them. Under your bed, Lee?

LEE
Way under. (RICHARD goes into house)

(Pause)

Good ol' Richard's sure got the run of the place, doesn't he? Just like one of the family.

WENDY
What's wrong, Lee? You seem kind of anxious.

LEE (To her)
Where's mom and dad? I have to talk to them.

WENDY
They're doing the dishes. Why?

LEE (Same)
I'm going away, Wendy.

FINGLE (Moving to LEE)
Lee? I've been doing some thinking. I want to apologize for our little misunderstanding this morning. I guess we got off on the wrong foot or something. (Offers his hand. LEE takes it) ... I think you're a kid with fine potential. I've always thought that.

LEE (Not unfriendly)
Oh really? Potential for what?

FINGLE
For lots of things. For being warm and likeable mostly. When you were a boy you were a rascal but everyone was amused by you. I was too. I've been thinking about that time the priesthood class went camping in the mountains. You pulled the tent down on top of us because you wanted to sleep outside in the open air and I wouldn't let you. I didn't want you to catch pneumonia for heavensake!

LEE
It wasn't that cold.

(Pause)

(FINGLE laughs softly)

FINGLE

It hurt me when you stopped coming to church Lee. I wish you'd come back. We all miss you so much. I'd help you find the gospel again. Only if you asked me mind you. You might even see your way toward a mission some day. Who knows? Anyway. It sure would be nice to see you back in church with your people again.

LEE

If you had your way you'd make everyone a Mormon. Wouldn't you?

FINGLE

(Simply)

By God's commandment.

LEE

Go away, Uncle Fingle. Go away before we start fighting. Look I know you think I'm a hopeless prick. I just don't have your faith and feeling. Well good for you! Sing and pray until the cows come home! But leave me out of it.

FINGLE

I've tried to reach you lad. But it seems you only want to hurt me. I'll be in the church for a while, Wendy. I'll come back later for your mother's surprise.

(HE goes to the gate, starts to jump it but changes his mind and exits through it.)

WENDY

(Going after FINGLE)

Oh Lee... Bishop wait. Don't go away like that.

LEE

(Desperately)

Wendy, don't leave me now. Stay here with me. Be with me when I explain things to mom and dad.

WENDY

Are you really going away?

LEE

Yes.

WENDY

I don't believe you.

LEE

I am. Honestly! And I need you with me when I tell them.

WENDY

Oh Lee, I don't know. I mean you have to do that by yourself. I can't help you.

LEE

You mean you won't! You're afraid to back me up in front of them.

WENDY

I can't think straight, Lee. You hurt the Bishop's feelings. I have to talk to him. I'll be back... Bishop!

(She exits yard)

LEE

Wendy, please!

(Slight pause)

RICHARD

(Returning from house)

I can't find the horseshoes anywhere. Have you seen them?

LEE

I haven't seen them for years, Richard.

RICHARD

I thought you said they were under your... Wild goose chase, huh? ... What's the matter, Lee? You seem so troubled today.

LEE

Smug, cocky, and troubled. There! I've been described. I may as well die.

RICHARD

(Securing their privacy)

Where's Wendy and the Bishop?

LEE

She's walking him to the church. If you hurry you can catch them.

(Pause)

RICHARD

If you don't mind I'd rather stay here with you.

LEE

Suit yourself, but I'm not in much of a mood for company.

RICHARD

Why are you trying to give me a bad time, Lee?

LEE

What makes you think that?

RICHARD

Well aren't you? Stop and consider how you've been treating me. I don't deserve the cold shoulder you've been giving me since I got home... C'mon Lee, we've been friends for a long time.

LEE

Friends stick together.

RICHARD

I still care about you.

LEE

We don't care about the same things any more. Just leave me alone.

RICHARD

Don't let my mission come between us.

LEE

It already has!

(Pause)

RICHARD

Gimme a chance, Lee. That's all I'm asking. Let me show you how much I've missed you.

LEE

It doesn't matter any more. None of it matters. We'll just go on our merry way. No hard feelings.

(Slight pause)

RICHARD

Have you made lots of new friends in the city?

LEE

Sure.

RICHARD

Old times forgotten, huh? No more us.

LEE

(Angrily)

Look Richard, we had our chance. You blew it! So don't gimme any of that sentimental crap. You only went on your mission in the first place because your parents wanted you to. Your parents never trusted me. I know they didn't. They put plenty of pressure on you. Don't deny it!

RICHARD

That isn't true! I wanted my mission! I told you I did!

LEE

Well what about me? What about the things we had going? I was dead serious about going travelling together. Remember our blood-pact? Damnit as sure as I'm standing here we could've built that boat. I know it.

RICHARD

Those were just dreams. They were exciting, sure. But pointless really.

LEE

Oh Christ ... I thought you believed in them too.

RICHARD

I did for a while. But the idea of my mission started to mean more to me. I'm sorry.

LEE

I hate your lousy guts.

RICHARD

You don't mean that.

(Pause)

(LEE turns his back on him)

Hey Lee... if I was so wrong and you were so right why didn't you build the boat and go along with our crazy dreams yourself?

LEE

Because you were exactly one half of those crazy dreams and I couldn't keep them lit by myself.

RICHARD

But you were the one with the knack for building things. I just held the lantern and the nails. Remember?

(Pause)

LEE

Richard...? Take your righteous ass and get out of my sight. This is still my home.

RICHARD

Don't do this to me, Lee. Please.

LEE

You've made your choice. Run along and explore it.

RICHARD

I know what I'm doing, Lee. It's the Truth. I know where my life is leading and you're just jealous because you can't say the same.

LEE

Where are you going? Tell me.

RICHARD

I'm going to live God's commandments so I can earn a place beside Him when I die.

LEE

That simple, eh?

RICHARD

Yes. And I'm going to do it with Wendy because I love her. Where are you going?

LEE

I'm going to the coast. Wanna come?

RICHARD

Are you going alone?

LEE

No.

RICHARD

Wendy mentioned something about a girl you met. Is she worth it?

LEE

Richard, living for you sounds a whole lot like waiting for death and that doesn't turn me on too much.

(Pause)

(WENDY returns, unseen; listens)

RICHARD

I'm going to find Wendy. When you've decided to grow up let me know.

LEE

(Stopping him)

Don't push her into it, Richard. I'm warning you.

RICHARD

What are you talking about?

LEE

Don't make her think she has to marry you.

RICHARD

I want to marry her. You can't stand in the way.

LEE

She doesn't want to marry you, but she will because everybody expects her to and because you seem so sure of everything. She doesn't love you. She's too young, Richard.

RICHARD

She loves me.

LEE

She loves everybody the same way! She'll stop growing! Believe me she will. She'll work in Fingle's store and then raise kids for the rest of her life. She'll leave herself behind.

RICHARD

You've got it all wrong. She isn't selfish like you. (Starts away)

LEE

(Grabbing his arm)

Don't take her, Richard. I mean it.

RICHARD

I won't go through you to get to her.

LEE

You will if I make you.

RICHARD

I won't fight you, Lee.

LEE

Remember when we were kids? We used to fight all the time. Friends. We bloodied each other's face more times than I can count.

RICHARD

Let go of me.

LEE
Are you still my friend? (He shoves RICHARD)

RICHARD
I'm trying!

LEE
Prove it to me. Show me you still care.

RICHARD
I love you!

LEE (Shoving him again)
Then fight me.

WENDY (Rushing into the yard)
No, Lee! Stop!

LEE
Get out of the way, Wendy.

WENDY
Please, don't!

LEE
Get out!

WENDY (Rushing into the house)
Dad! Daddy come quick!

RICHARD
You don't have to do this. It isn't right!

LEE
You don't know what's right.

RICHARD
I know this is wrong! Don't be crazy!

LEE
Do you love me?

RICHARD
Yes!

LEE
Then damn you fight me! (RUBIN, followed by MARY and WENDY, come from the house)

RUBIN
What's going on here? Lee!

LEE
Get out of the way.

RUBIN (Sternly)
Put down your fists.

MARY

Lee what happened? Your friend!

RICHARD

It's not his fault. It just happened.

RUBIN

Two grown men should be able to settle their differences without tearing each other apart.

(Pause)

RICHARD

I'm sorry, Lee. Try to understand. Trust me please.

LEE

No.

RICHARD

It's going to hurt me for a long time. Because I meant every word I said to you.

(Pause)

Are you okay, Wendy?

WENDY

Yes.

RICHARD

Will you come for a little walk with me?

(Pause)

(Looks at LEE)

I want to be alone with you for a while.

WENDY

Oh Lee...

(Touching LEE)

RICHARD

C'mon love.

(Kindly)

(Pause)

(They exit into street)

RUBIN

What was that about, Lee?

LEE

Nothing.

RUBIN

Can't you talk about it?

MARY

We'll listen.

LEE

There's nothing to talk about.

RUBIN

Then as far as I'm concerned the matter is over... Now. Would you leave us alone please, mother?

MARY

I want to stay, father.

LEE

Let her stay, dad. There's something I have to tell both of you.

RUBIN

Hold on to it, son. Let me say my piece first.

LEE

No, I have to tell you now.

RUBIN

But I've been waiting so long. Your mother and I were just discussing it. It's going to mean a great deal to you.

LEE

Dad, I'm going away.

(Pause)

RUBIN

What did you say?

LEE

I'm going to the coast with a friend of mine.

RUBIN

I don't believe you.

LEE

It's true.

MARY

But Lee...

RUBIN

You can't!

LEE

Why not? What do you care?!

RUBIN

Listen to me!

LEE

I've made up my mind!

RUBIN

JUST LISTEN TO ME ... Please.

(Grabbing his shoulders)

(Pause)

Are you listening?

LEE

Alright I'm listening. What do you want?

Be careful, father.

MARY

What is it?

LEE

(Pause)

Son... I'm going to move the family back out to the homestead. And I want you to be my partner.

RUBIN

Partner?

LEE

Yes. On the farm. I'll be giving Gifford his notice on Monday so he can be off soon after harvest. We can be out there working on the old house before winter.

RUBIN

Before winter?

LEE

There's lots of work to be done around there to make a home of it again. More than one pair of hands can handle properly. You've always been good with your hands. You like being outdoors. Sure you do! Back to the land eh son! That's what everybody's shouting these days. If you throw a rock into the air it'll come down on a man with the same dream.

RUBIN

But dad...

LEE

It's a chance for you and me to start seeing eye to eye again.

RUBIN

When have we ever seen eye to eye?

LEE

There were times.

RUBIN

Never!

LEE

We love you.

MARY

I don't believe you!

LEE

(Pause)

Lee, do you remember that time I took you hunting pheasants in the coulees up near the homestead? You were only small.

RUBIN

I don't remember.

LEE

RUBIN

We sat down on a ridge looking across the fields and had some lunch together.

LEE

I said I don't remember.

RUBIN

The sun was real warm and the wind was moving in all the directions. The wheatfields were moving in all directions. We watched them for a long time without saying anything... Remember?

(Pause)

(LEE avoids RUBIN'S eyes)

I told you to close your eyes and listen real closely. You said to what? And I said just listen. Pretty soon you could hear something ringing in your ears.

LEE

I didn't hear anything.

RUBIN

You said you did. Like the sound you get when you're dizzy or when you wake up too quick.

LEE

I was lying.

RUBIN

Then I told you to open your eyes and look clear across the valley where all the fields were together like squares on a crazy quilt. And you did.

LEE

I was pretending.

RUBIN

And you could still hear that ringing noise.

LEE

I don't remember.

RUBIN

Remember what I told you that noise was?

LEE

No.

RUBIN

I told you it was the sound of your body talking to itself and that it only happened at very special times... and you smiled. You smiled a great big smile and held my hand.

(Pause)

You remember. I know you do. Do you remember how you felt?

LEE
 Yes.
 RUBIN
 What was it like? What do you remember most?

LEE
 I remember...

RUBIN
 Yes son?

LEE
 I remember... that the wheatfields, moving, looked like waves to me.

RUBIN
 What?

LEE
 THE WHEATFIELDS LOOKED LIKE WAVES!

(LEE rushes from the yard)

RUBIN
 Lee...?

(Pause)

LEEEEEE!

(Dim to black. End of Act One)

Offstage song:

Into the West when dawned,
 When dawned that faithful day
 The Mormon host moved slowly,
 Moved slowly on its way
 Toward our greatest goal,
 The gilded western sun,
 Into a world unknown,
 A world not yet begun.

Where barren sagebrush prairies
 And hostile Indians hordes
 Comprised the West's own welcome,
 All it could then afford.
 Our pioneers pressed forward,
 Bound for a realm of peace
 Where strife among the world,
 The world and them might cease.

The rumble of the axles,
 Stout axles built of oak,
 The pant of beasts revealing
 Their straining at the yoke,
 The screams of brakes and children,
 Of wagons bed and gear
 Were mingled sounds with laughter
 That listening ears might hear.

When twilight shades had cooled,
 Had cooled the desert's breath,
 Then camped these hosts of Israel
 Upon the plains of death.
 Their prayers arose from circles
 Of faithful Saints drawn round
 The campfires of these pilgrims,
 These pilgrims western bound.

(over)

Then followed close each other
Along the winding trail
While summer's sweltering heat and
Mirages did prevail.
And hurricanes of dust
And awful frightening drought
Came rushing down upon them
From the torrid South.

At each day's camp skull milestones
For those to come they'd leave,
Encouraging directions
That others might perceive.
Thus on and on they travelled
O'er rivers choked with ice
Where bloodstains marked the passage
To show they'd paid a price.

Now ox teams swimming rivers
To cross from shore to shore,
And people on large rafts
Just guided by an oar,
And bands of redskin beggars
Molesting through the day
Would steal at night and kill
When they were brought to bay.

Ere ending this journey
Through hunger, want and pain,
The aged ones were dying
Along the wagon train.
New babies born of mothers,
To mothers gone tan pale,
Who prayerfully kept plodding
Along the Mormon Trail.

What grateful prayers are offered
At last as they descend
Into mountain valleys
Which marked the journey's end,
Where few white men's feet
As yet had ever trod,
But where these pioneer pilgrims
Could live and worship God.

(Later that afternoon.
RUBIN, FINGLE, MARY, WENDY
and RICHARD are gathered
around the patchwork quilt.
The air is a mix of cele-
bration and anxiety.)

MARY

...Now this patch here, this blue one, is cut from a summer coat that belonged to your great grampa Leavitt, on my side of the family. In fact it was probably the one he was wearing when he visited the Prophet Joseph Smith and his beloved brother Hyrum in Carthage Jail just days before they were murdered.

RICHARD

Mrs. Cook, this is the most wonderful engagement gift I can imagine. A real legacy of your ancestors, Wendy. Whaddya think of that?

WENDY

(Less than ardent)

It's beautiful.

RICHARD

You must have spent hours rummaging through old trunks.

MARY

That I did. The smell of moth balls nearly knocked me out sometimes. I might have fallen in an old trunk and never been found again. I peered at old photographs until I was seeing double. I had to make sure which article of clothing belonged to whom you understand.

FINGLE

And there's a story behind every patch I bet.

MARY

Of course there is — that's half the fun. Now remember you two, it goes into your cedar chest until your first baby is born.

RICHARD

Now that's what I call incentive! Eh, Wendy?

WENDY

I guess so.

MARY

Is something the matter, Wendy? Don't you like the quilt?

WENDY

I love the quilt. No, nothing's the matter. I'm just a little...

FINGLE

She's just a little bewildered. Aren't you love? It's not every day you give yourself away in marriage.

WENDY

We're not married, bishop. We're just engaged.

FINGLE

Well I'm ready to do the honors whenever the word is "go". And the sooner the better — before the excitement wears off!

MARY

Oh, we're so happy for you two! I must admit I've been on pins and needles waiting. Haven't I father? ... Father?

(RUBIN has wandered a ways off to look down the street)

RUBIN

What? ... Oh, yes, that's for sure. She walks up and down the aisle on my shins every night. Maybe now I'll be able to get some sleep.

(Pause)

(Laughter)

FINGLE

Are you expecting someone, Rubin?

RUBIN

No no... I thought I saw Lee coming. It was just the neighbor boy.

WENDY

(Overhearing)

Is Lee coming?

RUBIN

No, Wendy.

WENDY

It isn't quite the same without the whole family.

RICHARD

Oh he'll be around soon. I wouldn't worry. Where does this patch come from Mrs. Cook?

MARY

Well now, that's my favorite one I think. My mother told me the story a hundred times when she was alive. I cut it from the inside of a sleeve of a dress that's never been worn... least not in public.

RICHARD

Sounds mysterious.

MARY

Well you see, my great grandfather Elam was living along the Provo River with his wife Barbara Dean and his wife Mary Joy. They both loved Elam very much because he was such a kind, hard-working man, and a good husband to both of them. Well they'd do just about anything for him... But one day Elam was called to the Santa Clara Mission in California to teach the Gospel to the Indians. Now he was gone in the mission field for nearly a year when he was stricken with a disease and died. His companions sent his body home to his wives along with all of his belongings... Well! Among his belongings you'll never guess what they found — a box with a beautiful white dress in it, bought brand new

MARY (continued)

for one of his wives... but they didn't know which one. So Barbara Dean and Mary Joy put the dress in the bottom of the family trunk and swore never to wear it out of deep respect for their dead husband whom they both loved very, very, very much... Well, no one can know this for sure of course, but the story's been told that sometimes in the middle of the night when one or the other was sleeping, the other would lift the dress carefully out of the trunk, put it on, and dance and play fancy in front of her mirror.

(Pause)

There! Whaddya think of that?

FINGLE

Sister, I've heard you tell it a hundred times, and it gets juicier every time.

MARY

Bishop! I'm surprised.

WENDY

Will you be leaving me to go on more missions, Richard?

RICHARD

Well I will if the Lord calls me.

WENDY

Oh.

RICHARD

Don't worry, I don't think I'm that special.

WENDY

I hope not.

FINGLE

My mission lasted ten years and I never regretted a day of it. What's this curious checkered patch, Mary?

MARY

I'm surprised you don't recognize it. It's from an old work shirt worn by your father.

FINGLE

What did you say?

MARY

It's your father's.

FINGLE

But that's impossible.

RUBIN

(Jumping in)

We've heard enough stories, Mary. Give the quilt to the kids and be done with it. When their baby is born we can bring it out and hear them all over again.

FINGLE

Rubin, where did that shirt come from? (Just to him) It was the one he was wearing that night.

RUBIN

(Turning to MARY)

Mary, I don't know what makes you think you can go tousling through my father's things any old time you want.

MARY

I didn't mean any harm. I was only stitching together some memories for the kids.

RICHARD

What's going on here?

FINGLE

Finding something old isn't necessarily finding it memorable. I told you to burn our father's things, Rubin.

RUBIN

I decided to keep them.

FINGLE

And the letters?

RUBIN

Those too.

FINGLE

That filth! Why? None of us want a record of the dirty goings-on of a drunken maniac. Where are they? I'll put a match to them and scatter the ashes!

MARY

They're gone.

RUBIN

What did you say, Mary?

MARY

I didn't come across your father's letters anywhere. I meant to tell you.

RICHARD

Hey! Wendy and I are getting married remember?

FINGLE

Well where are they then? They couldn't have got up and walked away by themselves.

(WENDY fidgets uncomfortably.
RUBIN watches her)

RUBIN

They were in the bottom of the trunk.

MARY

I didn't see them honest.

RUBIN
Wendy...? Is something wrong?

WENDY
Well... no.

RUBIN
Have you seen the letters from your grandfather?

WENDY
Yes.

RUBIN
Where are they?

WENDY
Lee has them. I didn't know they meant so much.

MARY
They don't, dear; don't be upset.

FINGLE
So Lee has them. Well. Birds of a feather.

MARY
Bishop, please!

FINGLE
I'm sorry. I must sound like I hate the boy. I don't. He only frustrates me. Always getting his hands in the grime. How do you know he has the letters, Wendy?

WENDY
He reads them to me sometimes.

FINGLE
My loving God. Has he no respect for a lady either?

WENDY
They weren't all dirty. Some were funny and adventurous too.

FINGLE
Why can't the dead be dead? Gone, gone, like the dust in the wind.

RUBIN
No one's gone completely. Not while there's still someone alive to remember them.

FINGLE
And I suppose you feel obliged to go running back home and live in that tomb to prove it.

WENDY
What tomb?

RUBIN
I told you! I'm doing it for Lee.

Doing what? WENDY

Wasting his time! FINGLE

Mother? WENDY

MARY
Your father has been thinking about moving back to the homestead.

RUBIN
Mary I'm certain of it!

FINGLE
What are you running from, Rubin? Is the pressure in this town
for change getting too much for you?

RUBIN
Fingle...

FINGLE
Have you lost your faith and testimony?

RUBIN
No!

FINGLE
You're turning your back without a fight.

RUBIN
No!

FINGLE
The Mormon settlers fought every step of the way!

RUBIN
Fingle...

FINGLE
Don't forget the Missouri persecutions!

RUBIN
But Fingle...

FINGLE
We were driven out by the thousands! Murdered and starved!

RUBIN
That was a hundred and fifty years ago!

FINGLE
Persecution sleeps!

RICHARD
What happened to the celebration?!

FINGLE
SHUT-UP, WE ARE CELEBRATING!

(Long pause)

Would someone please get me a drink of water?

WENDY
I will. (Goes into house)

FINGLE
I'm sorry, Richard. I didn't mean that like it sounded. I'm sorry, Rubin. I don't know what happened.

RUBIN
That's alright, Fingle. ~~We all have our days.~~

FINGLE (Nervous laugh)
I lost my head for a minute.

MARY
I think you've been doing too much geneology lately. Your ancestry is starting to creep up on you, bishop.

WENDY (Returning with glass of water)
Here bishop.

FINGLE
Thank you Wendy. I didn't mean to take the fun out of the occasion. Honest I didn't. I don't know what came over me.

RICHARD
Bishop, you don't really think the Church will be persecuted again, do you? We're established all over the world.

FINGLE
Oh it isn't that, Richard. It's just... Oh I don't know. I suppose I see our little town changing from what it used to be and it makes me sad. All the people coming who want their say in matters — Oh part of me understands, but they don't realize our pleasures and needs: the peace and comfort that we gain from sharing a common life... especially the love of God in one and only one way. We're all His children, don't you see? This community is His, not only in the chapel but on the street, in the school, in every home. This little town, every brick and stone and sigh, is an instrument of our faith and testimony. We make sacrifices, sure, because nothing should stand in the way of our belief. And it breaks my heart when I see some of our young people drifting away. Like Lee. And the Truth is as clear as the nose on their faces. I've tried everything. I don't know how to reach them. I don't have the words... Maybe I'm getting too old. Too old and narrow-minded. Maybe I should give up the bishopric to a younger man.

MARY

Oh what an idea! You're not old, bishop. You're still young and everybody respects you.

FINGLE

Oh I don't know.

RUBIN

Darn rights they do. You're still the best man for the job.

(Everyone ad-libs encouragement)

FINGLE

Do you think so?

RICHARD

And don't you let anybody tell you different.

FINGLE

Well... maybe for another year.

WENDY

For as long as you want. The town wouldn't be the same without you as bishop.

MARY

That's for sure!

FINGLE

Well then, until my legs give out! The day I can't get around to visit my people will be the day I open the pasture gate!

RUBIN

Good for you brother!

FINGLE

Good for me. Well! Now hasn't this been a nice afternoon with my family. But I dare say the fun is over. I must run over to the church and tidy up some priesthood business I started. The Lord's work must go on. No time to spare... Rubin... Before you go off half-cocked with your endeavors out of town, you think a little about the fine influence you have on our school children. Besides, Mary just might have plans for the house — a bright new home for some Indian children, our Lamenite brethren. Right Mary? You talk it over with Rubin and let me know. As for you two... Wendy, Richard... May the good Lord bless you with a temple marriage and a house full of fat babies. Good-by everyone. See you in church tomorrow!

(Ad-lib goodbyes from all as FINGLE starts away. But he comes to a stop a few yards from the fence. RUBIN walks over to him, puts his hand on his brother's shoulder.)

The Lord called me to the bishopric didn't He Rubin? He called me, not someone else.

RUBIN
That's right, Fingle. He called you.

FINGLE
He trusts me with His love then doesn't He?

RUBIN
As sure as you stand here.

FINGLE
Maybe He has a plan for me. Did you ever think of that?

RUBIN
You thought of it first. Go and take a look now.

(Pause)

(FINGLE musters every ounce of energy in his body, strides toward the fence, and makes a clean jump. He disappears smartly down the lane. Singing)

Put your shoulder to the wheel push along,
Do your duty with a heart full of song;
We all have work, let no one shirk,
Put your shoulder to the wheeeel!

MARY
Now there goes a man with a heart full of song.

RICHARD
We're in good hands aren't we?

RUBIN
Well no one can say he doesn't care about us.

WENDY
I was just thinking... We're the only family he has, aren't we?

(Pause)

RUBIN
Well! I think I'll walk through the garden and pull some weeds.

MARY
That's a good idea. I think I'll come with you for a bit. Do you mind having your wife along?

(Glances at WENDY and RICHARD)

RUBIN
Come along.

(He takes her hand and they disappear into the "garden"... RICHARD and WENDY face each other, a stride or two apart. He stretches out his arms for her... She doesn't move)

WENDY

Richard I...

RICHARD

What's the matter? ... Wendy?

WENDY

(Turning away)

I wonder where Lee is. I mean it isn't the same without the whole family... I mean...

RICHARD

What do you mean?

WENDY

Richard... My parents are the most perfect couple I know of. They're so...

RICHARD

Mine are the same way. When they get back from Salt Lake we'll throw another party at our place. Okay?

WENDY

What I mean is... When I... marry... I want to be as secure and confident as they are in their marriage. When I finally get married I want my children to have as much faith in me as I have in them. I want...

RICHARD

Wendy...?

(Pause)

WENDY

I'm not ready yet, Richard.

(Pause)

I'm sorry.

(Pause)

RICHARD

Wendy, we decided! What about our plans?

WENDY

What plans? We don't have any plans.

RICHARD

Our plans started when you said yes.

WENDY

Everything happened so quickly!

RICHARD

But I love you!

(Pause)

You don't love me, do you?

(WENDY puts her arms around him. He pushes her away gently)

WENDY

Yes I do love you! I still want to see you! I'm just not ready to get married! And I don't think you are either!

RICHARD

What will everyone say? They'll think we're stupid!

WENDY

Who cares what they say! It's my life!

RICHARD

... Your life! Well why did you say yes when I asked you?

(Pause)

WENDY

I don't know.

RICHARD

(Starting away)

Either do I. But I know why you changed your mind.

WENDY

Where are you going?

RICHARD

I'll kill him.

WENDY

Richard, wait!

RICHARD

I'll knock his brains out for trying to twist up your life! I'll find him and I'll do it!

WENDY

Richard! It isn't Lee's fault!

RICHARD

Don't try to stop me!

WENDY

Richard!

(RICHARD exits quickly into street. WENDY sits and cries... A moment passes... BETH comes in off the street, looking for LEE. She sees WENDY and approaches her carefully)

BETH

Hi, Wendy.

WENDY

Oh! Beth...

(Quickly brushing away her tears)

BETH

Hope I'm not bothering you. Is Lee here?

WENDY

No he isn't. I don't know where he is for sure. I can't promise when he'll be back.

BETH

... Lee was expecting me.

WENDY

If he was expecting you, he'll be here.

BETH

Is something wrong?

WENDY

No I hope not.

(Pause)

BETH

Didn't he tell you?

WENDY

Tell me what?

BETH

Didn't he tell anyone? ... He's coming with me to Vancouver.

WENDY

With you?

BETH

He said he was. Maybe he changed his mind. He's a funny sort of guy. I've never met anyone like him... and I've met a lot of guys.

WENDY

Have you?

BETH

Oh sure... but none like Lee. I think he likes me too.

WENDY

Oh I'm sure he does.

BETH

Maybe too much.

WENDY

What do you mean?

BETH

I mean I'm not used to his kind of affection. It's so... desperate! Oh don't listen to me. I'm just crazy.

WENDY

No, I think I know what you mean. Maybe you know him better than any of us.

(Pause)

Why are you going to Vancouver?

Why not?

BETH

Do you have a job there?

WENDY

Not yet. I'll be looking though. I sing and play guitar. I'll try to find work in a lounge or something. Vancouver's a good place for that sort of thing.

BETH

What kind of songs do you sing?

WENDY

Oh I write my own. Just crazy little things but I like them.

BETH

Sing me one.

WENDY

Now?

BETH

Please. Sing me a happy one. Okay?

WENDY

Sure, if you want. Let's see... I feel kinda naked without my guitar.

BETH

(Laughs)

Is that the title?

WENDY

No, that's just how I feel... Let's see now... I know! I wrote this for Dee just after I met him.

BETH

(Laughs)

(Pause)

He watched me with his hungry eyes
From a table all alone.
It was late and he looked lonely so
I brought him two more for the road.

(As she sings, Mary
returns from the
garden and stands
listening)

He took my hand and kissed it,
Kinda corny but polite.
He asked me if I knew a girl
Who needed company that night.

I put the beer down on the table,
I put my leg against his knee.
I said honey you got sad eyes
You need something, it ain't me.

Lord, he ended up at my place.
We had a tumble in the hay.
He loved me like he loved me.
I'll learn not to pick up strays.

WENDY (Embarrassed and delighted)
Well....! That's really... cute.
It's a nice song.

BETH
Do you like it?

WENDY
I like it, Beth. I really do.

BETH
Do you? Well, Lee liked it too.

MARY
Yes I'm sure he did... And who's this?

BETH
My name's Beth. I'm a friend of Lee's.

WENDY
A real good friend of Lee's.

MARY
So I gather. Well my son isn't here right now, and I don't know when to expect him. I'll tell him you called by.

WENDY
Mum, she's sort of waiting for him. I mean he was expecting her to come.

MARY
I see. Well he's never mentioned you before. Are you and he...?
Did you say you met somewhere?

BETH
We met in a bar one night. The warehouse he worked at was right next door.

MARY (Sarcastically)
Oh I see — in the fancy part of the city.

BETH
We just started talking and had a few drinks. I don't remember the name of the place any more.

MARY
I shouldn't wonder. And I suppose you're the one who keeps him up all hours of the night and sends him home sick and mindless with liquor.

(BETH is speechless)

WENDY
Mum, they're friends. She wrote a song to Lee.

MARY
I heard it. And I suppose you call that singing.

BETH
Look, I didn't mean to cause any problems.

MARY

You pour that filth down his throat and who knows what all!

BETH

I didn't pour anything down his throat! He does what he pleases and that's fine with me. In fact I admire him for it.

MARY

Admire?

BETH

I like your son a lot. Believe me, I wouldn't do anything to hurt him.

WENDY

Mum...?

MARY

He has trouble living the Gospel that's been taught to him and you're no help!

BETH

I'm not trying to help him. Why should I?

MARY

Then you know what to expect from him.

BETH

I don't expect anything from him! I think that's why he likes me.

MARY

He isn't a strong boy! He needs his family.

WENDY

Mum, don't.

RUBIN

(Returning from garden)

What's going on now?

MARY

So just leave him alone!

RUBIN

Mary?

MARY

Do you hear me?

BETH

What have I done?

RUBIN

Who is this girl?

MARY

She's come to take my son away. WELL I WON'T STAND FOR IT.

RUBIN

So you're the one.

WENDY
Go Beth. Lee will find you.

BETH
I don't know what I've done!

MARY
Oh yes you do!

BETH
No.

WENDY
Mum....!

(LEE appears in the lane
somewhere during this
last exchange)

MARY
You'll take a bite out of my son and spit the rest away!

BETH
That's ridiculous!

MARY
You will not disrupt my family!

BETH
Please don't!

RUBIN
Now Mary...

MARY
Go home and ruin your own!

BETH
SHUTUP!

LEE (Rushing to BETH)
Hey stop it! For chrissakes what are you doing?!... Beth?

(Clutches her arms)

BETH
No! Let go of me!

WENDY
Lee I'm sorry.

LEE (Frantically)
What have you done to her?

BETH (Struggling)
Let go of me!

RUBIN
Lee be calm.

MARY
Come to me Lee.

LEE
Are you all going crazy?!!

BETH
LET GO OF ME!

(She breaks free from LEE and runs out of the yard where she meets RICHARD storming in)

LEE
Beth wait! Don't leave me!

(He turns to follow her and comes face to face with RICHARD... who stands between LEE and the gate)

(Pause)
Get out of the way.

RICHARD
No.

LEE
MOVE!

RICHARD
Now you know how it feels. When you wake up she'll be gone.

LEE
I SAID MOVE!
WENDY
Oh Richard!

(He tries to go through RICHARD who squares off and punches him. LEE falls)

(Pause)
RICHARD
I'm sorry Lee. Oh God I'm sorry.

(Pause) (LEE stands quietly)

S ay something Lee. You hate me inside I know you do. Hit me please. I want you to.

LEE
I don't hate you any more. I told you. Nothing matters. None of it matters.

RICHARD (Looking into his palm)
I've still got mine. Do you?... They'll never go away completely.

LEE
Like some memories. (He moves toward the gate)

(Pause)
RUBIN
Lee! (LEE stops) ... Let her go. She isn't important.

(Pause)
Don't leave us like this... If you do, damnit, I never want you back in this home again.

(Pause) (LEE exits yard to look for BETH)

RUBIN (continued)

LEE!

(Pause)

MARY

(Beside herself)

Well I'm a singer too. Lee used to sit on my lap and I'd sing songs to him. He was happy listening to my songs. I could sing the wings off a blue jay when I was younger. Everybody said I could. Didn't they, Rubin.

RUBIN

Yes, Mary, they did.

(Pause)

MARY

Oh my Lord, my good God — What have I done?

(MARY rushes crying into house. RUBIN follows)

RUBIN

Mary...

(Long pause)

(Disappearing into house)

(RICHARD has one hand cupped over the palm of the other as if holding something small and warm...)

WENDY

Did you hurt your hand?

RICHARD

It's okay.

WENDY

Let me see.

RICHARD

Leave me alone.

WENDY

Don't turn away from me.

RICHARD

What do you want?

WENDY

I don't know!

(Pause)

RICHARD

I feel empty.

WENDY

I feel like crying.

RICHARD

We need you Lord.

(Quite softly)

(Pause)

(He closes his eyes)

WENDY

Are you praying?

RICHARD

No. Not really. (Opens his eyes) ... I was thinking about Lee.

WENDY

Were you?

RICHARD

I was remembering the time we built that raft and floated down the coulee.

WENDY

I remember too. You wouldn't let me come.

RICHARD

We were navigating the Amazon. It wasn't safe for girls... We went about five miles. It was hard poling because the coulee bed was so thick and muddy. It was hot out but we didn't care. The sweat was coming through our shirts. We kept touching the wet places. We were proud of it... Then we came up to your grampa's old homestead. I knew Lee had it in mind to go there all along even though he didn't say. He had his grampa's letters in a cigar box with him. We pulled the raft part way up the bank and then walked to the house. All of the doors and windows were boarded up so we went in through the root cellar. Well we kicked around the house for a half hour or so and I was bored with it but Lee wanted to see everything. He wanted to go up in the attic. So we did... I couldn't tell what it was at first. The room was really small. But there were dark stains everywhere... on the walls, on the ceiling, all over the floor. It was blood. The wood was soft. The blood had soaked right into it for good.

WENDY

Stop Richard. I don't want to hear.

RICHARD

We sat right down in the middle of the floor and lit a candle we'd brought along. Lee opened the box of letters and read every one out loud to me. He was fascinated by them.

WENDY

I know.

RICHARD

One of the letters told how your grampa was planning to sail to South America someday. It was his biggest dream. Everything was leading up to it. All he needed was a boat, and the time.

WENDY

He never went.

RICHARD

I know. That's when Lee told me that he wanted us to do it. Build a boat and sail to South America. Oh he had a way of making everything sound so possible.

WENDY

And you said you would.

RICHARD

(Nods)

... He took out his pocket knife. We cut into our palms and sealed them together so our blood would unite. We made a pledge. The candle sizzled. The walls were bleeding. My hair stood up and something rushed through me.

(Pause)

The only other time I've felt like that was when the spirit of the Lord came into me that evening along the river in France... Hold me, Wendy. I don't know who I am.

(Pause)

(They put their arms
around each other)

WENDY

Did you miss me on your mission?

RICHARD

Yes... Were you glad when I came home?

WENDY

I was glad. I was very nervous too.

RICHARD

So was I.

(Pause)

Have I changed a lot?

WENDY

A little. Two years is a long time... But Richard... I'll still marry you if you want.

(Pause)

RICHARD

No Wendy. You're not thinking clearly now. You were right before to call it off.

WENDY

We'll try to get to know each other again. Won't we?

RICHARD

Give it time... I don't know if I really love you.

WENDY

I guess I don't either.

(Pause)

RICHARD

I have to be alone for a while.

WENDY

No. Don't leave me now. Please.

RICHARD

Something is wrong and it frightens me. This shouldn't have happened.

WENDY

What do you mean?

RICHARD

I'm going to pray. I'm going to ask the Lord to bring Lee back so I can talk to him again... I don't know why I should have to give him up. It isn't right.

WENDY

I'll be thinking of you.

RICHARD

See you soon.)

(He exits yard. WENDY stands alone and feels it deeply... She goes down on her knees. Blackout)

ACT TWO
Scene Two

80

(Much after midnight.
RUBIN is sitting alone.
There is an old shotgun
across his knees... Sings)

RUBIN

Oh, how well do I remember, when thoughts of bygone days—
How those memories are bringing ever near,
When I sit and muse and ponder, I feel somewhat amazed
As those memories are ringing in my ears.

I remember when my father, returning home at night,
And my mother greets him at the door;
I can see her old long dresses a dragging on the floor;
O, dresses, drag that way no more.

You can see my mother old and weary,
With her dresses dragging on the floor;
Many days she dragged those dresses 'round the cabin door;
O, dresses, drag that way no more.

'Tis the song and the prayer of the people:
Ditches, ditches break that way no more;
Many times we have mended places in which you broke before.
O, ditches break that way no more.

(Pause)

Oh God... Dear Lord... Bless this house tonight. Take care of my
children and my wife. And if you have time for me, your servant,
grant me some light. I'm a good man God because I love you... But
sometimes, I don't quite see the way. Are you punishing me for my
weaknesses? ... Forgive me, Lord. Give me a small crutch of light
so I might find my way through this darkness without stumbling blind
into sin.

(Pause)

(MARY comes out of the
house)

MARY

My God, Rubin! What on earth are you doing with that gun? Have you
gone mad?

RUBIN

Be still, Mary. I don't plan to shoot anyone.

MARY

Isn't that your father's gun? I thought you kept it locked away.

RUBIN

It's a beautiful old gun. His favorite. Lee always wanted it. When
he comes home tonight I'm going to give it to him. He'd like that.

(Pause)

MARY

It's late.

RUBIN

Did I wake you? I meant to be quiet.

MARY

No. I haven't slept a wink. I was putting Wendy to bed. She's been crying all night.

RUBIN

I know.

MARY

We talked about things and then she settled down... She asked me a question, Rubin, which I didn't know how to answer.

RUBIN

What was that?

MARY

She asked me how much a person should sacrifice for their beliefs.

(Pause)

C'mon love. Let's go back to bed. We weren't born to behave like owls.

RUBIN

You go on, Mary. I want to wait up for him,

MARY

I don't think that's a good idea. The time will gnaw away at your patience and you'll get far too angry. Wait and see him in the morning.

(Pause)

RUBIN

You don't think he'll come home do you?

MARY

I don't know. Do you?

RUBIN

Yes. I think he will. I have a feeling he will.

MARY

If he doesn't it's my fault. I did a very selfish thing. If he hates me for the rest of his life I'll understand.

RUBIN

Don't be silly, Mary. The girl means nothing to him. It's just the idea of her... because she's different.

MARY

(thoughtfully)

Different.

(Pause)

MARY (continued)

He's with her right now.

RUBIN

Go to bed. You sound so tired.

MARY

Come with me then.

RUBIN

No, I won't sleep.

MARY

There's nothing we can solve tonight. Maybe in the morning. Rubin.

RUBIN

No! Not in the morning. Tonight! Now leave me alone if you're just going to scold me.

MARY

I'm not scolding you.

RUBIN

You're just waiting for the chance.

MARY

I'm not either! Alright I will go to bed, if you're going to be that way.

RUBIN

Mary... Stay. Please.

(She sits close to him)

(Pause)

I'm sorry. It's my temper again. I can't seem to control it lately. My mind goes red and I want to scream at something. This whole summer I've wanted to rip something with my hands. What kind of creature am I? By God, sometimes I feel haunted.

MARY

Haunted, Rubin? Haunted by what?

(Pause)

RUBIN

Mary...? Have you ever wanted to change anything in the past—change it so badly that you can actually smell and feel the moment that could've been... different? Tell me, have you?

MARY

Lands! What an idea, Rubin. I think you need some sleep in you. It's a silly notion and I won't play with you. Why I wouldn't change a thing. I wouldn't change a flea on the old dog's tail.

RUBIN

Then you're satisfied with your life.

MARY

Of course I am. What's got into you tonight? You and your long thoughts.

RUBIN

Oh nothing. Never mind. I'm just talking to pass the time.

(Pause)

MARY

I love you.

RUBIN

Oh Mary. You make me feel wonderful despite everything. When I look at you I want the world to last forever with me and you in it.

MARY

Heavens! Not this old girl. I don't understand the world as it is today let alone forever. Give me a cool grave when I'm ready... Mind you, when I was eighteen I did want it to last and last. Just turning the same season over and over again. The Autumn was my favorite. With the leaves changing color and falling on the hills we used to climb. Oh you remember. "The leaves aren't dying," you used to say, "They're just carrying on tradition. They'll be green come Spring again." Remember? Oh remember the harvest dance? You went with someone else but you winked at me during a waltz over her shoulder. I was dancing with Fingle and was feeling sort of proud and guilty at the same time because he was so much older than me. Remember Rubin? I was wearing my rust gown with the wide waistband.

RUBIN

I remember.

MARY

I was really quite pretty wasn't I? Oh, then we all went for a ride on that haywagon and had a sing-a-long. My sister Evelyn, of course, sat herself right-smack-dab down in the middle of everyone and sang as loud as she could... It was really warm out wasn't it? Everybody was laughing and having fun. Oh you thought you were really smart with a long strand of bailer twine with a loop in it. You were playing cowboy and roping people from behind. You roped my hand and pulled me down beside you. I was all butterflies. You said, "What's your wish, Mary?" and I said, "The big, bad moon in my pocket," and you said, "Watch out then, I'm going to lasso the moon for you!"

RUBIN

I would have, but my rope got caught in the stars of your eyes and I've never been the same since.

MARY

Oh you.

(Pause)

(They cuddle closely)

Am I getting old, Rubin? I think I must be. Funny how time flies, isn't it? Seems like yesterday our children were babies. Birthday parties, Christmas concerts, bicycles, boy scouts... My! Always something. Now look at them — all grown up in a blink! ... Where do the years go?

RUBIN

Do you remember that night in choir practice?

MARY

Will I ever forget? I was trying to sing soprano but you kept confusing me. And when you leaned over Mable Hardy's hat and asked me to marry you I dropped a note like an old tin can!

RUBIN

I couldn't stop laughing for the life of me.

MARY

The organist stopped playing and everyone stared at me!

RUBIN

Your face was beet red and your eyes were like saucers!

MARY

I could've died right there on the spot!

RUBIN

I couldn't stop laughing.

MARY

You devil!

RUBIN

Ha!

(Suddenly there is a loud noise and voices in the street. Singing).

LEE (Off — very drunk)

The good old keg of wine, boys, now don't you look fine
Strolling up and down the street, singing keggy mine...

BETH (Off — not as drunk as LEE)

C'mon, keep walking. We're almost there.

LEE (Off)

I'll hold your head, the keg holds mine, and that's a very good sign
That they got boozy woozy on the good old keg of wine!

MARY

What on earth?

RUBIN

Go inside, Mary. I'll handle this.

MARY

I want to see him.

RUBIN

Inside!

(Pause)

(He grabs her by the arm and takes her into the house. LEE and BETH enter the yard. BETH is supporting LEE who is very drunk)

BETH
Okay. Here we are. You're home now.

LEE (Singing)
The good old keg of wine, boys, now don't you look fine
Sprawling out upon the ground, singing keggy mine,
I'll hold your head, the ground bumped mine, and that's a very good sign
That they got boozy woozy on the good old keg of wiiiine!

BETH
Are you going to be alright?

LEE
Is the sky blue? (Looks upwards) ... Black?

BETH
I'm going now, Lee. If you ever come to Vancouver look me up. Promise?

LEE
You betch your little boobies I will.

BETH
Good. Okay. I'm off. Don't try to stop me.

LEE
Oh I won't.

BETH
G'bye Lee. It's been a great summer for me. I'll write you.

(She kisses him on the head and
starts to walk away... but LEE
has hold of her coat tail)

LEE
Going somewhere?

BETH
Aw Lee. Lemme go. Please.

LEE
C'mon siddown for a minute.

BETH
Gimme one good reason why I should?

LEE
Because I love you.

BETH
Oh God. Why me? I'm not that special. I've told you a hundred times.

LEE
Tell me again.

BETH
I'm not that special.

LEE
Yes you are.

BETH
Lee...

(He wraps his arms around
her and kisses her softly
on the neck)

(Pause)

LEE
I need you, Beth. Doesn't that make your heart bounce?

BETH
I don't want to be needed. Look Lee... I'd be lying if I said there
wasn't anything between us because there is. God I like you so much...
But I just don't want it right now.

LEE
It? What's it?

BETH
I don't love you, Lee. You wouldn't want me to lie to you would you?

LEE
Sure. Lie to me. Give yourself a chance. I'm not asking you to cut off
your hand... Just for as long as it lasts... with me.

BETH
You don't understand. I don't want you.

LEE
Why are you scared of me?

BETH
I'm not scared of you. Don't say that. I just don't want to be involved.
I don't want to be the one to pull you away from your family. I feel my-
self doing it, and I don't want to feel responsible for you. I'd hate
that. It would screw me up. Believe me it would.

LEE
I couldn't hurt you.

BETH
You already have!

(Pause)
It just wouldn't work, Lee. I know now it wouldn't.

(Pause)
LEE
I see.

(Pause)
So...

(Pause)
What should I do with my love for you? Got any bright suggestions?

BETH

I don't know. You gotta work it out somehow. For yourself. You'll find a way.

LEE

(Bitterly)

Off-hand I can't think of one.

BETH

Then you just gotta live with it for a while. Until you find someone else maybe. That's all I can say.

LEE

How should I treat you the next time I see you? I mean I'll always love you.

BETH

I don't know. Maybe you can find another way to show it. Or maybe next time I'll need you. Who knows?

(Pause)

LEE

So...

BETH

So... Life goes on, huh?

(Pause)

Hey Lee, don't feel so wasted. You made me feel a lot of good things. Honest you did.

(Pause)

(She kisses him. He doesn't react)

Look me up sometime... Will you? ... I mean it. Lee?

(Pause)

See yuh.

(Pause)

(She leaves)

(RUBIN comes out of the house cradling the old shotgun in his arms)

RUBIN

Is she gone?

(Pause)

I've been sitting up for you. I couldn't sleep... Lee? Look what I have. I want to give it to you. Here. Take it. I'm giving it to you.

LEE

I don't want it.

RUBIN

What do you mean you don't want it. Look. It's your grandfather's gun. You've always wanted it. See?

I see it. LEE

It's yours. RUBIN

What do you want from me?! LEE

(Pause)

I'm trying to reach you. RUBIN (With agony)

Why? LEE

(Pause)

I'm glad your home, Lee. Honest I am... Aren't you? RUBIN

I'm not home, dad... I'm just sitting here. I'm drunk. And I don't care any more. LEE

Look at me. RUBIN

You could be a thousand miles away right now. LEE

I'm standing right beside you, you drunken fool! LOOK AT ME! RUBIN

(Pause)

Why in God's name did you ever come home?

I didn't come home in God's name. I came home in mine... Leave me alone. LEE

I want to be with you. RUBIN

Damnit why?! LEE

Because you're my son! RUBIN

Is that the only goddamn reason? Stay away from me! I can smell your stinking conscience from here. LEE

What are you talking about? RUBIN

LEE

C'mon big daddy, let's just move out to the farm. We'll pretend we're pioneers and everyone'll be happy.

RUBIN

You're so damn drunk you don't know what you're saying. I want the farm again so we can share something together. So we can have a new start with each other. Doesn't that mean anything to you?

LEE

It means you're so goddamn scared you're a failure you can't live with yourself. Lousy fake!

RUBIN

You tramp.

LEE

Oh Christ, wonderful teacher!

RUBIN

Shut-up!-

LEE

Look at your own son you phoney son-of-a-bitch. EVERYBODY LOOK!

RUBIN

Shut-up!

LEE

Can't throw me outa the house cuz it ain't like a Mormon.

LEE

You're wrong!

LEE

Can't keep me around cuz it makes you look bad in town.

RUBIN

That's not true!

LEE

So just hide me out on the farm and pray I get my shit together in time to save your fucking conscience!

RUBIN

I need you! There I said it. Do you want to hear it again?

(MARY comes to the door)

LEE

Don't lie to me!

RUBIN

Damnit I need you!

LEE

Liar!

(RUBIN slaps LEE. MARY rushes to him)

MARY
No Rubin... Oh Lee my baby.

LEE
Don't touch me.

RUBIN
Go inside, Mary.

MARY
No.... Come and I'll put you to bed.

LEE
Get away!

RUBIN
Stop shouting! You'll wake up the whole town.

LEE
Good! Let's gettun all out here! We'll have a homecoming party! Just like we had for good ol' Richard!

(Pause)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry I can't be like Richard. I know how much that disappoints you.

MARY
We don't want you like Richard. We want you. Just you.

LEE
Do you? Do you really?

MARY
Yes of course.

LEE
Then why don't you show it?

MARY
We do show it. Sure we do. Don't we, Rubin? It's true. Isn't it, father?

(Pause)

RUBIN
I don't know. I think we've tried. Haven't we? ... Lee? Help us.

(Pause)

LEE
Help you what? Help you convince yourselves that everything's fine? Well I won't because it isn't! It just isn't! Are you blind?

MARY and RUBIN
We love you, son. We love you.

LEE

I DON'T WANT YOUR LOVE!

(Pause)

Oh God yes.. Yes! I want your love. But not to smother me! Not your kind of love that makes me wish I was dead.

MARY

(Together)

RUBIN

Lee!

Dead?

LEE

Your love makes me feel guilty for living... for not believing in the same things as you. Well I don't want your love any more. I just want your....

(Pause)

(To RUBIN)

Don't you think I've ever needed you? Don't you think I ever wanted to share my times with you. To come home at night, and wake you. And tell you what I've done. Tell you about my friends... about my life!

RUBIN

All you had to do was come to me.

LEE

Come to you! Don't make me laugh. You wouldn't know what to do if I did come to you. You wouldn't know what to say if I came to your bedroom in the middle of the night. You'd be afraid of me.

RUBIN

I love you!

LEE

Your love is all wrong because you're afraid of me. I can feel it.

RUBIN

That isn't true!

LEE

You're so afraid of me it stinks.

RUBIN

No!

LEE

It stinks like the inside of that room in grampa's attic.

RUBIN

Nooooo....!

LEE

You fear me like you fear him and there is no room for love.

RUBIN

But Lee....!

LEE
Did you love him?

RUBIN
I don't know.

LEE
Did you hate him?

RUBIN
I don't know.

LEE
Were you afraid of him?

RUBIN
I don't know!

LEE
GODDAMIT TALK TO ME. SHOW ME YOUR STOMACH YOU BASTARD! DON'T BURY ME
TOO! I WANT TO LIVE! I WANT TO LOVE YOU!!

RUBIN
YES! YES YES YES!!!

(Pause)

Oh God. My loving God. How I feared him. Yes. Even during our prayers at night, when mother asked the Lord to forgive him... I feared him most. Well she was dying because of him! He put her through Hell and torment and she kept forgiving him! She told us to forgive him with our love like she did... But inside I hated him for taking advantage of her strength, her kindness. He always came home. Always. No matter what. He knew she would always be there. Waiting. Forgiving. Not me. I couldn't.

(Pause)

That night... that night he came home, stumbling, swearing, singing his dirty songs... I was in bed. Trying or pretending to sleep. I could smell the whisky coming into our bedroom. Fingle was awake too. I could hear him praying under his breath. I heard my mother get out of bed, and then the shouting and screaming, and finally my mother's sobs... Suddenly, Fingle jumped out of bed and ran into the other room where they were. He'd never done that before. And they started fighting — my father and my brother. I thought the whole house would break apart from itself! I hid my head under the pillow. I was hiding my head...

(Pause)

Then the bedroom door opened. It opened slowly and the smell of whisky grew stronger. And my father staggered into the room. Mom had taken Fingle outside for some air and to wash the blood from his face... I was alone with him. He sat down beside me. And he started whispering to me. He asked me to come up into the attic and have a little drink with him. "Just one little drink, Ruby," he said, "One little drink with your dad." But I said no. I shook my head and kept shaking it. No, no, no, I

RUBIN (continued)

couldn't. I was afraid. "Just one for me, Ruby, and I'll tell you some stories. Please Ruby." He begged me, Mary, and I wouldn't!

(Pause)

So he went upstairs by himself, into the attic where he drank by himself. The smell of him was still in the room and I was trying to keep from crying when I heard the gun go off.

MARY

(With pain)

Oh Rubin.

(Pause)

RUBIN

Mom finally told him to leave and never come back. He wouldn't go. Fingle tried to make him go. They beat each other... And then I rejected him. My own father. In our own home.... I never... showed him any affection. Never. I couldn't... But maybe if I had. If I'd tried...

(Pause)

Forgive me.

MARY

Don't say that.

RUBIN

Forgive me.

MARY

It wasn't your fault.

RUBIN

Forgive me!

MARY

It just happened.

RUBIN

FORGIVE ME!

(Long pause)

(He looks at LEE for a long moment, blankly, without clear emotion. LEE stares back; his lips move but no words come. MARY watches RUBIN with pain and longing)

RUBIN

I'm tired... I'm tired.

(Pause)

(RUBIN goes into the house... A moment later LEE begins striking the gun against the ground, again and again, trying to smash it. He finally hurls it across the yard)

Mom....?

LEE

(He vomits)

(Pause)

MARY

Are you alright now? ... Say something, Lee. I can't read your eyes.

(Pause)

LEE

I don't know what to do, mom. What should I do?

MARY

I can't tell you that.

LEE

(Overcome with panic)

I don't know what to do. I don't! I'll make mistakes by myself.
I've never been alone. I'm scared!

MARY

Stop it now.

LEE

I'm scared!

MARY

(Shaking him firmly)

I said stop it!

(Pause)

LEE

I can't stay here any more. Can I?

MARY

Can you?

LEE

No. No, I have to leave now.

MARY

Yes. I know.

LEE

But you don't understand, do you? You've never wanted or needed anything outside of this stubborn little town. You'll never know how I feel. How I burn inside.

MARY

Yes I do.

LEE

Do you believe me?

MARY

Yes... I believe you. Believe me I do.

(Pause)

Where will you go?

LEE

I don't know. To the coast maybe.

MARY

With her?

LEE

No.

MARY

I'm sorry. Forgive my... interference.

LEE

It isn't your fault. It just happened.

MARY

Why didn't you ever mention her?

LEE

I didn't know how.

MARY

Did you love her very much?

LEE

I think so. Maybe I'll find her again someday. Then I'll know.

MARY

Or someone.

(Pause)

LEE

I better go now. I don't think I should see dad again.

MARY

You're right. The day is over for him.

LEE

Just tell him...

MARY

Don't worry. I'll do my best to explain. Deep down I think he knows.

LEE

And Wendy...

MARY

You'll never have a closer friend. She'll understand.

LEE

This doesn't mean I don't love all of you.

MARY

Oh the opposite I think. Where will you stay tonight?

LEE

It's nearly daylight. I think I'll just walk around for a while. I'll come by in the morning and pick up some things while you're all at church. I'll try to leave a letter if I can think of anything to say.

MARY

Don't try to understand everything all at once. Just live with it for a while. Take it with you. And so... take care my love. Here's a kiss from everyone. (She kisses him)... And one from me. (Kisses him)

LEE

G'bye mum... I'll be back.

MARY

Sure you will. Good luck.

LEE

Thank you.

MARY

Write my name in the sand.

LEE

I will.

MARY

Good.

LEE

I'll go my own way. God ... Go my own way.

MARY

Now go. Make it worth something... Don't just stand there staring at me! Just go! I said go!

(Pause)

(LEE leaves yard quickly)

Don't come home, Lee. Don't come home until you are stronger and gentler than all of us. Find peace. Don't hide your pain away. Go quickly now... and slowly. God be with you.

(Pause)

(RUBIN comes out of the house)

RUBIN

Aren't you ever coming to bed?

MARY

I thought you'd be sound asleep.

RUBIN

I tried. I can't sleep without you beside me... Where's Lee?

MARY

Nearby. Walking.

RUBIN

Did you kiss him goodnight for me? (MARY nods) ... Good. I'll talk to him first thing in the morning. I'll talk to him man to man. We'll just have to learn to get along. To accept each other. We've got a fresh start coming to us. I can feel it... Or am I dreaming, Mary?

MARY

Dreaming? ... Oh sure, a dream. A hope and a thought to take us through the night.

RUBIN

Yes. I suppose so.

(Pause)

Mary... I think I'll drive out to the homestead tomorrow. Have another look around. Go inside the house... Maybe I'll fix it up a little bit. Clean it out. It would make a fine hunting cabin. I could go out there on weekends to get away from school. Lee could come with me. What do you think?

MARY

I think that sounds grand, Rubin.

(Pause)

Oh and Rubin... while I'm thinking of it... Remind me tomorrow to talk to the Bishop about taking some Indian children into our home. If you're willing that is. I think I am now. We owe to the Lord for all the blessings we've received in this little town.

RUBIN

His town.

(Pause)

I'm tired. I think I can sleep now. Can you sleep, Mary? I think I can.

MARY

Yes... I think I can sleep too.

(They go into the house and shut the door gently behind them. Slow dim to black...
The end)